

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Young Socialists map out
spring campaigns

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Support farmers' fight against devastation

Immediate aid needed as farm and rural crisis deepens

Actions by farmers across the country, such as the Rally for Rural America in Washington, D.C., deserve the full support of all working people. Family farmers are facing devastation not seen for decades. Joining them in rallies and protests not only strengthens the farmers' fight, but advances the construction of a worker-farmer alliance needed to take on the employers and their government.

The demonstrations by farmers and their supporters represent a shift in direction towards political action—the only course that

EDITORIAL

can combat the conditions imposed on tens of thousands of farmers by the ruling class.

A partial rundown of the conditions working farmers face today highlights the scope of this crisis.

- Farm income in the United States plummeted 17 percent between 1996 and 1999. Thousands of farmers have been driven to bankruptcy. In this period farmers have seen a 42 percent drop in wheat prices, 39 percent in corn, and 20 percent in soybeans. Wheat and corn are at their lowest prices in 13 years and soybean prices are at a 25-year low.

- High cost insurance protection for crops seldom covers total losses.

- The worst drought conditions nationwide in half a century, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association.



Militant/Kathie Fitzgerald
Dairy farmers demand fair prices for milk February 1 in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. Faced with worsening conditions, farmers across the country have organized a March 21 Rally for Rural America in Washington, D.C.

tion. Hardest hit states include Arkansas, Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, and Tennessee in the South, and Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, and Nebraska in the Midwest. Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama had the driest Febru-

ary since the 1890s. Farmers in Texas have incurred more than \$90 million in losses so far this year, solely due to the drought.

- "Disaster relief" packages available to most farmers are like water from an eye

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Ukraine disaster kills 81 coal miners

BY JEREMY ROSE

At the Barakova Mine in the Ukraine, 81 coal miners were killed March 11 in one of the republic's deadliest mining disasters. Ninety-one miners were at the site of the

explosion 2,180 feet below the surface. In addition to those killed, four escaped and several more were injured. Some 200 others escaped other parts of the mine.

Methane gas is believed to be the cause

of the explosion. The odorless gas occurs naturally in coal mines, and is very explosive at concentrations between 5 and 14 percent. It is a particular threat in deep mines; adequate ventilation and air sampling are methods generally employed to prevent ignition.

"This is really the biggest catastrophe in the history of Ukraine's independence, it is a terrible disaster, and it is one of the biggest ever catastrophes at Ukraine's mines," Fuel and Energy Minister Serhiy Tulub declared.

Such accidents have become more frequent since the breakup of the Soviet Union and the "shock treatment" approach to imposing the capitalist free market, which, according to the Reuters news agency, has "forced economic survival to take precedence over safety."

The Ukrainian coal industry has suffered almost complete collapse since 1991 and is the most dangerous in the world. Sixty-three Ukrainian miners died in an explosion in the nearby Donetsk region two years ago. There are some 400,000 coal miners in the Ukraine. The number of miners killed on the job in 1998 was 360 and in 1999 it was 274.

Dmytro Kalitventsev, head of the Independent Miners Union at Barakova, reportedly blamed mine officials for turning a blind eye to safety violations to increase production. Actual output at the mine exceeded capacity, according to Kalitventsev. "These extra tons are paid for with the miners' lives," he told reporters.

Steelworkers in Ohio build rally for March 25

BY HENRY HILLENBRAND

MANSFIELD, Ohio—Steelworkers locked out at the AK Steel rolling mill here have been aggressively reaching out to fellow unionists throughout Ohio and adjoining states to maximize attendance at their March 25 solidarity rally. They are building the action to involve other fighters engaged in struggles with the employers.

Armed with a 10-minute video, information sheets, buttons, and bumper stickers, a number of rank-and-file workers have spoken before numerous union locals and labor bodies, distributing the video and other materials as they go.

Some 620 members of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) are standing up the company's concession demands.

A team of locked-out workers who are women participated in the first USWA women's conference in early February, where they widely publicized the rally and met others on strike or locked out.

The Steelworkers explain that the company's demand for forced "doubles"—two eight-hour shifts back-to-back—is one of the issues in dispute.

They point to how the union offered to extend the old contract beyond the August 1999 expiration date, but the bosses instead erected a fence and brought in a couple

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Truckers' rally in U.S. capital

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Independent truckers organized cross-country convoys this week to highlight the growing crisis they face with gas prices at sky-high levels.

The convoys began in southern California, Florida, and across the Northeast days before a March 16 rally, called by the National Owner Operators Trucking Association (NOOTA).

Some 200 truckers gathered at a simultaneous rally on the other side of the capital sponsored by the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association.

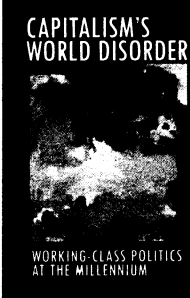
"I am here to support this rally due to increasing fuel prices, rates, broker fees, and taxes," said Steven Dokins, a produce driver from West Union, South Carolina. "We can win by all getting together—all the truckers and anyone who has to go to the fuel pump."

Jerrod Stevens hauls produce from around Hanover, Pennsylvania, he said, to distribution centers in Florida. "I make about \$1,800 per trip. \$600-700 of that now goes to fuel. My broker gets 15 percent. I have to pay \$200-400 for someone to unload the produce in Florida. That is all before tires, repairs and other costs," he said. "I've come to this rally because the truckers need immediate relief. And the politicians better listen before the country comes to a standstill."

Each action featured a number of capitalist politicians. Mostly Republicans spoke at the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association event.

During the rally one trucker suggested that if they did not get immediate relief they would organize to shut Washington, D.C., down. The proposal was met by rousing applause from the truckers present.

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Mine workers' meeting discusses fight for health, safety— page 6

Young fighters face similar challenges worldwide, says Cuban student leader

BY GEOFF MIRELOWITZ

SEATTLE—Cuban student leader Roberto González spoke to 150 people here March 7-8 to urge participation in a continent-wide student conference scheduled for Havana. González is a leader of Cuba's Federation of University Students (FEU). He was accompanied by Cuban diplomat Alejandro Pila. The two are visiting several cities in the United States to build the 12th Latin American and Caribbean Students Congress, which will take place April 1-5 in Cuba.

The FEU expects 5,000 participants from at least 23 countries to attend. The meeting is "an excellent opportunity for American students to know the reality of the Latin American continent," González told Bellevue Community College (BCC) students, "as well as to learn the reality of Cuba."

The idea for a congress of Latin American students originated with Che Guevara, the Argentine-born Cuban revolutionary leader, González said. The "main principal and purpose" is to unite students of the continent "not because they all think the same way but because they are part of the same generation" facing similar challenges, he pointed out. Che's ideas "will be present at this congress." This includes, he added, Che's idea of "the 'new man' ready to fight anywhere in the world."

At a meeting at the University of Washington one student asked about Cuban students' perspective on the strike at Mexico's Autonomous University, where students shut down the university to protest tuition hikes and other austerity measures demanded by the government. Mexican students will have an important presence at the April congress, González said.

"Our federation is looking for closer relations with students in this country," he said. "In Cuba we don't know much about the situation of university students in the United States. It is great for us to learn from and to talk to you." This is a process Cuban youth hope to continue at the congress. Previous such conferences, he said, did not include many participants from North America.

"We have been educating people for 41 years," since the victory of the Cuban revolution in 1959, Pila said. Participants in the congress will discover "the political culture



Inset: Militant/Carole Lesnick

Students in Mexico protest proposed tuition increase. The Latin American and Caribbean Students Congress aims to unite students of the continent "not because they all think the same way," but because they all face similar challenges, said Roberto González (inset), a leader of Cuba's Federation of University Students.

we have in Cuba. Young people are very political. It is part of the defense of our reality" against Washington's hostility towards the revolution.

Supports revolution

At North Seattle Community College González was asked why, when students in other countries are often seen in the streets protesting government policies, Cuban students are supporters of the government. "When you know what the government of Cuba does for our people and the people of the rest of the world," he replied, "you believe in the government and support it."

"The best part of our society, of our revolution, and what I have learned is to work for other people," he said. "I work to help the society in which I live."

González pointed to the opposite example in the United States. There's enormous wealth here, he said, but it's spent by Washington on the military while universities are

needed in Latin America and Africa, hospitals are needed in Africa, and vaccination programs are needed for children around the world. Despite the economic difficulties it faces, Cuba has built a new Latin American medical school. Students from throughout Latin America who study there "are from the poorest regions of those countries," he said. The school is free to these students. Another new school is being built to train Latin American physical education teachers. "That is why

the vast majority of students support the revolution," he explained. "We support a government that has taught us to think first about the welfare of other people, not our own."

González said that during his stay in the United States he found out about the tens of millions of dollars spent on electoral campaigns here. "They say this is a democracy, yet you need millions of dollars to become president," he said. In Los Angeles, González said he learned that more money is spent on prisons and jails than for public universities, and he pointed to the brutality African-Americans face at the hands of the police as well as the metal detectors used in many high schools. "These problems can be solved," he emphasized, "and we have solved them in Cuba." Cuban students, "don't only support the government," he added, "but are fighting to make our society better."

'Universities in Cuba are free'

In response to a question at the University of Washington, González explained some of the differences between universities in Cuba and the United States. "All universities in Cuba are managed by the state and are completely free," he said. This includes tuition, books, and dormitories. Each student receives a government stipend. The FEU "participates in all decisions made about education in Cuba," at every school and university.

"As a Third World country we face a lack of resources," he pointed out. "We cannot guarantee each student a computer," or frequent access to the Internet. To ameliorate this problem computer labs in Cuba are open 24 hours a day to maximize the number of students who can use them.

During the tour several students expressed interest in attending the congress.

Iowa: 'Stop Iraq bombing now!'

BY EDWIN FRUIT

DES MOINES, Iowa—Sixty people, the vast majority students, held a rally outside the Iowa Air National Guard base here March 4. The 132nd Fighter Wing, based in Iowa, has had three tours of duty in Iraq and is expected to leave later this month for a fourth. More than 200 airmen will participate in enforcing the "no-fly" zones imposed on Iraq as a result of the 1990-91 war waged against that country.

Washington and its imperialist allies carry out nearly daily bombings of Iraq. The first week of March, for example, U.S. planes bombed the country on three separate days.

The protest was organized by the Iowa Committee to End War Crimes Against Iraq. Chants included, "Food for Iraq, Send the bombs back," and "Stop the bombing, now."

Chuck Quilty, who recently returned from Iraq, described how the economic embargo was killing thousands of children and that hospitals and medical care were very much affected by the embargo.

Twenty of the demonstrators staged a sit-

in at the entrance to the base. They were promptly arrested and taken away in police vans. Father Frank Cordaro read a statement which said in part, "We want the Iowa Air National Guard to stay in Iowa and not have them break international law and commit war crimes."

According to the Associated Press, during a raid last August in which members of the Iowa Air National Guard participated, three people on the ground were injured and a mosque was destroyed.

Participants in the rally included students from Drake University in Des Moines, St. Louis University, and Grinnell College.

At a campaign event in Detroit March 8, U.S. vice president Albert Gore reiterated his support for continuing sanctions against Iraq. The next day U.S. and British war planes bombed Tall Afar in Iraq, injuring one civilian, according to press reports.

Edwin Fruit is a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 1149 in Perry, Iowa.

THE MILITANT

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New right-wing party founded in Canada

BY JOE YOUNG

MONTREAL—A section of the ruling class here has concluded there is no hope of building a right-wing party with significant support in Quebec, and has instead launched a new electoral alliance to challenge the ruling Liberal Party.

There is going to be a sharp fight for the leadership of Canada's new right-wing party, the Canadian Reform Conservative Alliance. Stockwell Day, the treasurer of Alberta's provincial government, has announced his intention to challenge Preston Manning, the leader of the Reform Party, the official opposition in Canada's parliament. Day is known for having introduced a single rate of taxation or "flat tax" in Alberta.

The Canadian Alliance was founded at the end of January at a convention in Ottawa. The party was formed to challenge the ruling Liberal Party in the federal election expected next year. It is composed primarily of forces from the Reform Party, but also includes significant participation from the provincial Conservative parties in Alberta and Ontario where they form the government. Tom Long, a prominent advisor to Ontario's Conservative premier Michael

Harris, was a keynote speaker at the convention.

Significantly, there was almost no participation from Quebec. A couple of minor figures in Quebec politics, Jean Allaire and Rodrigue Biron, who had participated in previous meetings, either stayed away in the first case or only hung around in the corridors in the other. The Reform Party, which is a major component of the new party, is known for its hostility to the rights of the Quebecois.

The aim of the Canadian Alliance is to win a majority based on a massive breakthrough in Ontario without counting on any real gains in Quebec. Only twice in the last few decades has this occurred. In 1957 and 1979 federal governments were elected with minimal support in Quebec.

The fact that a major party aims to form a government without support in Quebec is an important development. It is a sign of further fracturing and weakening of the domination of Canada's ruling wealthy families.

A minority wing of the Canadian ruling class has come to the conclusion that they cannot win a major base in Quebec for keeping Canada united and are determined to rule

Canada—including Quebec—without significant support from the oppressed Quebecois nation.

One reason for this development is the decision of the sovereignist Bloc Québécois to maintain itself on the federal level, which seriously limits the possibility for parties other than the Liberal Party to win support in Quebec. This reflects the fact that the bourgeois sovereignist forces see few possibilities of allying with forces outside of Quebec in their search for greater powers for the provincial government.

A reactionary program

The Alliance's program includes a flat tax of 17 percent on all taxpayers, end of waste-fulness in government, and defense of the family, which Reform Party leader Preston Manning describes "as the principal building block of society." They also voice opposition to same-sex marriage, advocate tightening rules on immigration, oppose more money for health care, and call for maintaining law and order and more military spending.

When some immigrants from China arrived in Canada by boat, the Reform Party raised a hue and cry against allowing them

to be accepted as refugees. "China is a country in full growth and even if several think it is not as good to live there as in Canada, that country does not correspond to the criteria for obtaining the status of refugee," said John Reynolds of the Reform Party.

Another target of the Reform Party is native rights. Reform mounted a major campaign against a treaty signed between the Nisga'a of British Columbia and the federal government. Trying to stop approval, Reform Members of Parliament (MP) submitted 471 amendments. They argued that there should be a referendum on the treaty where all British Columbians, and not just the Nisga'a, would vote.

The Reform Party MPs persistently denounce the Liberals for corruption. A scandal has broken out involving massive hand-outs to Liberal Party friends by the federal Human Resources Department headed by Jane Stewart. This has shaken the Liberal Party and is a sign that not everyone in ruling circles is satisfied with its performance.

Almost every day Reform MPs denounce this in parliament. For example, Deborah Grey, Reform deputy leader, declared February 22, "The Minister of Human Resources and the prime minister are a perfect couple. Since Imelda Marcos, I have never seen someone have such a flair for deals as this prime minister. This couple spends other people's money."

During a tour in the West, Manning has been attacking the federal Conservative party and its leader, Joe Clark. In a speech in Calgary, he declared, "The Conservatives have lost the right in Canada to represent social, economic, and democratic conservatism." Clark has refused to participate in the founding of the Alliance.

The Conservatives are in crisis. They are deeply divided over their attitude to the Liberal government's so-called clarity law, which establishes that in a Quebec referendum 50 percent plus one is not enough to separate from Canada. Party leader Joe Clark is opposing the law but deputy leader Elsie Wayne supports it.

Every other party in parliament supports the law except for the sovereignist Bloc Québécois, which is allied with the governing Parti Québécois in Quebec. With the maintenance of the Bloc Quebecois there is little hope of the Conservatives winning significant support in Quebec.

Joe Young is a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 501.

Canadian rulers attack public health care

BY MIKE BARKER

VANCOUVER, Canada—In a move aimed at further undermining Canada's publicly funded, nonprofit hospital system, the provincial government in Alberta introduced legislation March 2 to allow for-profit hospitals to compete with public hospitals.

Alberta premier Ralph Klein, whose government shut down a number of public hospitals and reduced hospital beds by half, claims that Bill 11, the so-called Health Care Protection Act, will not create private hospitals. The bill, however, narrowly defines hospitals as "buildings that have emergency services."

This opens the door for private facilities to provide a wide range of nonemergency surgical services, including those requiring extended stays. The bill does not allow the for-profit facilities to do major surgery but, in a direct conflict of interest, it leaves the definition of what is major and what is minor up to the Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons.

Many doctors have large investments in the growing number of private clinics where patients are encouraged to purchase additional profitable services.

This crisis in Alberta and across Canada has sparked resistance. On the day the Alberta government introduced Bill 11, some 100 protesters showed up at the Alberta legislature in Edmonton with signs reading, "Wealth should not buy health," and "No to Private Hospitals."

Over the past two years, nurses across Canada have taken the lead in fighting deteriorating health care. In a series of province-wide strikes, nurses demanded the hiring of thousands of more nurses to reverse the years of cuts.

In Saskatchewan and Quebec, nurses refused to end their strikes in the face of back-to-work legislation by the same governments they were striking against. These walkouts received overwhelming support from working people, and the governments were forced to respond with promises to hire more nurses.

The Klein government's argument that private facilities will reduce long waiting lists for surgery, frequently citing as an example the waits for hip replacement, has already begun to unwind. The Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons declared the day after the bill was introduced that due to its complexity and the need for postoperative follow-up, hip-joint replacement surgery required the services of a full-service, public hospital.

A study done by the Alberta branch of the Consumers Association of Canada shows that in Calgary, where virtually all eye surgery is done in private clinics, patients wait 16 to 20 weeks for a cataract operation. In Edmonton, where 80 percent of the work is done in public facilities, patients wait five to seven weeks.

The shortest waits are in Lethbridge where all cataract surgeries are done in public hospitals.

Governments in every province have been



Militant/Monica Jones

Health care workers, in the British Columbia Government and Service Employees Union, in Vancouver last April. The last two years have seen many such protests.

following the same course, including dropping services such as annual physical or eye exams from coverage by Medicare, Canada's publicly funded health insurance. Prince Edward Island refuses to allow or fund abortion services.

These and other measures have led to an increase in the proportion of health-care spending coming out of individual pockets, from about 25 percent two decades ago to 31.3 percent today.

Ottawa's share of health funding falls

Cuts in transfer payments by the federal government to the provinces reached \$36 billion by the end of the 1990s. Facing rising criticism from provincial premiers and others, the government restored a portion of that sum over the last two years. Since the mid-1960s, when Medicare was established, the federal government's share of public health-care funding has fallen from 50 percent to 13 percent, with the difference being shouldered by provincial governments.

The deteriorating situation in health care was starkly seen this winter with almost daily reports from across Canada of overcrowded emergency rooms where patients are kept on stretchers in hallways and linen closets, or not even let in the door. An 18-year-old suffering from severe asthma died when his ambulance was redirected to a more distant hospital from the nearest emergency department minutes away because it could take no more patients.

The health-care crisis has had a severe effect upon those who work in the system. Burnout due to understaffing and incessant overtime is one of the main reasons for a shortage of operating room nurses and physicians. Research done last year says that 60 percent of health-care workers in emergency rooms across Canada have been as-

saulted, and half of them say that violence is impairing the quality of care.

Mike Barker is a member of the Hospital Employees Union.

Massachusetts nurse, union, fight dismissal

BY TED LEONARD

BOSTON—"I'm not going to quit until the public understands what is going on," explained Barry Adams after the Board of Registration in Nursing (BORN), the Massachusetts state board that regulates nursing, dismissed his complaint March 8.

Since 1996 Adams has been waging a fight against the nurse supervisors who fired him after he spoke out against understaffing at the Youville Health Care Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he was a nurse. Shortly after he was fired from the extended-care facility, a patient died from a morphine overdose.

Thirty supporters packed the small hearing room where the board considered his complaint. Another 30 picketed outside the building. "We need more nurses like Barry Adams," "Equal accountability for all nurses," and "Justice for Barry Adams is Justice for all Nurses," read the signs carried by the protesters.

The action supporting Adams was organized by the Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA), which has 20,000 members. Adams's case has struck a chord with many nurses because it raises the point of view that nurse-managers, who implement cost-cutting decisions, reduce staff, or use inexperienced personnel, should be responsible for any care-related accidents.

As David Schildmeier, a spokesperson for the MNA, explains, "He's become a national symbol for courageous nurses who stand up

for patients and get punished for doing so."

In 1997 the National Labor Relations Board ruled that Adams had been unjustly fired and ordered him reinstated with back pay. A year later he resubmitted a complaint he had filed in 1996 with BORN, accusing his nurse supervisors of unprofessional and unethical conduct. The 1998 complaint, which added his firing as further evidence, was the complaint the board dismissed.

Explaining why BORN dropped his case, Adams said, "Health care is big business. Their decision is to aid big business. They are not going to set new precedents that would hold nurse executives accountable."

Nurses and their supporters attended the protest from across the state. More than half a dozen students studying nursing at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell attended the hearing. Sarah, one of the students, explained that she came to the hearing because "we need to stick together. We care for people. We need to care for each other too."

Bryan, another student, said, "It is important to be here. I will be a nurse in the future and will face the same problems."

The students invited Adams to come to their school to speak about his fight. Adams is also considering challenging the state agency's decision in court.

Ted Leonard is a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees.



YS leaders map out campaigns for the spring

This column is written and edited by the Young Socialists (YS), an international organization of young workers, students, and other youth fighting for socialism. For more information about the YS write to: Young Socialists, 3284 23rd St., San Francisco, CA 94110. Tel: (415) 824-1429. E-mail: 105162.605@compuserve.com

BY AUTUMN KNOWLTON

NEW YORK—Leaders of the Young Socialists met here March 4—5 to map out the organization's spring campaigns. Members of the YS National Committee were joined at the meeting by a number of other YS members and chapter organizers. Revolutionary youth from 17 cities participated.

In a report to the meeting, YS National Executive Committee member Samantha Kern noted the important role youth have played in recent protest actions. Kern pointed to the January 17 demonstration in Columbia, South Carolina, demanding that the Confederate battle flag be removed from the state capital building, and to high school students in New York who organized walk-outs in protest of the "not guilty" verdict of four New York cops who killed Amadou Diallo in his apartment building last year.

During the discussion, YS member Shem Morton from Los Angeles explained a fight developing at El Modena High School. The school board there is planning to suspend all noncurricular activities to keep the Gay-Straight Alliance, an organized student group, from holding meetings at the school. The YS supports the fight of the students to be able to meet and discuss politics on the campus. He said he has noticed that young

people "are starting to wake up because of the fights that are breaking out everywhere."

YS member Willie Cotton from Tucson, Arizona, said he was recently invited to speak about the Cuban revolution at a class at his university. After his presentation on the Cuban revolution, students were interested in discussing socialism and what it has to offer to humanity.

Kern pointed out that these activities highlight the opportunities for young people to become involved in politics and the need for a revolutionary organization to be an effective part of those struggles. By being involved in these protests and by raising a communist perspective with other youth, the YS will continue to recruit members and build chapters.

"Politics in the United States is opening up," Kern said. "Attacks like the new 'anti-crime' legislation in California targeting youth and democratic rights in general, and moves to end affirmative action in Florida are being responded to by young fighters who are looking for real solutions to the pressures and problems that capitalism breeds."

Over the coming months YS members will reach out to fighters such as these, "following the real lines of resistance taking place around the country," the YS leader said. "Along this path we will meet young workers and students interested in joining a revolutionary youth organization and fighting to overthrow capitalism."

YS members plan on joining teams around the country that can reinforce the work of socialists who are setting up units in Fresno, California; the coalfields; the Carolinas; and elsewhere. Many YS mem-

bers will participate in the teams during their spring break from school and work. YS members are helping to lead this geographic expansion of the socialist movement in the Western coalfields and central California.

At the center of the Young Socialists' activities in the coming months will be the Socialist Workers 2000 election campaign. The Young Socialists want to take advantage of this opportunity to meet young fighters interested in an alternative to the big business politics represented by the Democrats and Republicans. In addition to the presidential ticket, socialists in many states will run for U.S. Senate and Congress, as well as state offices. This provides a political axis around which Young Socialists members can get out to all parts of the country to campaign for communism and to attract young people toward joining the Young Socialists.

The NC members at the meeting also voted to move the YS National Office from San Francisco to New York City, the heart of political activity in the United States. The YS chapters in the Northeast have become stronger in recent months, and there is enough leadership in the area to sustain the responsibilities of maintaining the national office. A new National Executive Committee was elected to organize the work of the YS in the coming months and to lead the spring campaigns.

Building delegation to OCLAE congress

Another main campaign of the YS will be building participation in the conference of the Continental Latin America and Caribbean Students Organization (OCLAE), which will take place in Havana, Cuba, April

1—5. YS members from across the country reported on activities they are part of to build local delegations of students and other youth. YS members anticipate there will be many discussions at the congress about communist political perspectives advanced by Ernesto Che Guevara, the Argentine-born leader of the Cuban revolution. Participants in the YS leadership meeting discussed the need to read and study *Che Guevara Talks to Young People* with others going to the congress.

The YS National Committee also decided to launch a national fund drive March 15 that will run through June 1. The YS organizes fund drives twice a year so the organization can be self-financed and organizationally independent. In each city where there are YS members, plans will be made to set a goal and chart a course for reaching it through a regular rhythm of fund-raising throughout the drive. Some of the ideas for fund-raising include producing political T-shirts, speaking at events on campuses, and organizing raffles.

The weekend ended with a public meeting to celebrate the accomplishments of the communist movement and to hear a reportback from the Havana International Book Fair held last month in Cuba. The celebration also welcomed the YS national office to New York.

The YS raised \$160 at the meeting for the move to New York and sold 100 copies of *Join the Fight for Socialism: Join the Young Socialists* pamphlet, which will be distributed to young fighters all over the country interested in finding out more about the YS and in joining a revolutionary youth organization.

'Don't milk the farmers' say protesters in Cleveland

BY EVA BRAIMAN

CLEVELAND—Twenty-five dairy farmers and their supporters converged at the plant gate of milk processing giant Dairyman's—"Cleveland's largest milk distributor"—to protest the low prices they are being paid.

The spirited group held up bright signs such as "Don't milk the farmer," and were greeted with car horns and thumbs up by many passersby, including truckers who were hauling tankers of milk in and out of the plant.

Robert Cotterman, president of the Farmers Union of Ashtabula, Geauga, and Lake counties, raises beef on 477 acres. He explained that dairy farmers are currently receiving only \$9.90 per hundredweight for three-fifths butterfat milk, and consumers are paying roughly \$31.80 per hundredweight for lowfat milk.

"Why are the conglomerates not charged with price-fixing?" he asked. "Why does Congress only have a band-aid plan for farmers? How does the government expect us to continue to plant and produce at current prices? Who is getting the profits?"

"Not us," was the answer given by one of the young workers in the dairy who had stepped outside for a cigarette and was surprised to see a sidewalk filled with farmers.

Chad Smith, 25, who works on the dock for Dairyman's and is a member of Teamsters Local 336, expressed support for the farmers who are being driven into debt. "I believe that they are telling the truth," he said.

Scott Reichard, 24, who has worked at Dairyman's for seven years, said, "It seems like they're not getting a fair price for their milk. It doesn't seem right."

A maintenance worker in the plant criticized the farmers saying, "It's the government not the company that sets the price, so why are they here?"

Stanley Smolen, 78, a lifelong farmer from Jefferson, Ohio, came to the protest with his son-in-law, also a farmer. He explained that Dairyman's pays whatever they please and it's not enough to cover the farmers' cost of production.

"If they cut your wages by half, there would be an uprising. Well that's what's happening to us," Smolen said. "Prices are the same as they were when I was milking cows six years ago, but the cost of equipment and fuel has gone up. The only thing going down is the price we're paid, which

went from \$16.60 to \$9.90."

Another union member said the dairy foreman had warned employees not to talk or listen to the protesters. Other workers offered encouraging words to the farmers as they left for the day.

George, a dairy farmer for 20 years who has 54 milk cows, said these were the lowest prices he's seen. "This can't go on very

much longer or it will be curtains for the next generation."

Tom Yuhasz, who is a grain farmer and runs a grain elevator, said he came to the protest because "it's not just dairy farmers, it's all of agriculture. They are trying to take the land from the little people. My dad was a member of the Steelworkers and I know that if we don't unite they won't give us

anything."

Several of the farmers and their supporters are planning to attend the March 21 Rally for Rural America in Washington, D.C. The Ohio Farmers Union is organizing three buses for the event.

Eva Braiman is a member of United Auto Workers Local 2400.

Rally in Texas demands 'halt the executions'

BY LEA SHERMAN

AUSTIN, Texas—More than 300 opponents of the death penalty rallied and marched around the governor's mansion here March 4, demanding that all executions be stopped in Texas.

The spirited, youthful crowd chanted, "Governor Death, you can't hide. We've got justice on our side," and "No justice! No peace! Moratorium now!" as well as other slogans against the death penalty. Organized by the Austin chapter of the Campaign to End the Death Penalty, and endorsed by numerous civil rights and religious organizations, the action drew many students from the University of Texas in Austin.

Bethany Linder, an 18-year-old freshman, said people at information tables set up every day on campus told "students how important it is for youth to get involved in the injustices going on." This was her first demonstration, which came in the wake of the February 24 execution of Bettie Lou Beets and the March 1 execution of Odell Barnes.

Gov. George W. Bush refused appeals for stays of execution to Beets, who was a 62-year-old battered woman, as well as Barnes, whose case consisted of conclusive evidence that he was innocent.

Bush, who is running for president in the Republican primaries, has presided over 122 executions during his term as governor of Texas—more than any other governor in the country. He has used the death penalty to increase his chances of winning the election.

At the rally, a South African student said, "In South Africa during apartheid three judges were known as the 'doctors of death,' and in nine years they had 40 people executed. Bush in only six years has had over 100 executed. We are not going to take this anymore."

Bryan Hadley, a 25-year-old counselor at



Militant/David Ferguson

Several hundred opponents of the death penalty marched around the governor's mansion chanting, "Governor Death, you can't hide. We've got justice on our side."

Planned Parenthood, noted, "It is inspiring so many turned out for this protest." He moved to Texas a year ago and thought there would be much more resistance to the executions. "Now I can breathe a sigh of relief," he said, noting that this is his first demonstration against the death penalty.

David Ferguson, a garment worker and Socialist Workers candidate for Congress in Houston, hailed the march and rally as an important action in the fight to abolish the death penalty.

"Republican and Democratic politicians like Gov. George Ryan in Illinois want a

moratorium on the death penalty so they can prepare to more aggressively use capital punishment against working people. Workers can never get justice in the courtroom under capitalism. The use of the death penalty exposes the brutality of the capitalist system. Executing a battered woman, Betty Lou Beets and an innocent man, Odell Barnes, shows the moral bankruptcy of the ruling rich."

Lea Sherman is a meat packer and Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Senate from Texas.

Marchers in Selma counter rightists

BY CINDY JAQUITH
AND JACOB FOX

SELMA, Alabama—Thousands marched through the streets of this central Alabama city and over the Edmund Pettus Bridge March 5, where 35 years ago civil rights marchers were beaten and trampled by police with whips, nightsticks, and tear gas.

The march over the bridge is an annual event to mark the anniversary of the 1965 Selma to Montgomery walk for voting rights. Photographs and television footage of the brutal police attack on this peaceful demonstration, where scores were seriously injured, horrified millions across the country and around the world.

Groups of marchers came this year from all over the country—some as organized contingents from schools or churches, others on their own—as part of the special activities marking the 35th anniversary. The crowd, estimated by the police at 10,000, swelled due to the presence of President William Clinton. This is the first time a sitting U.S. president has participated in the commemoration.

Many of participants, especially from cities and towns in Alabama, made a last-minute decision to attend as a protest against a so-called "Southern Independence Day" rally the previous day in Montgomery. The rightist event called for the Confederate battle flag to be flown on top of the state Capitol. The State Capitol Police generously estimated that crowd at 2,500. Front-page pictures in the daily newspapers showed a sea of the racist flags and headlines like, "Johnny Rebs' rise again."

Many of the Selma marchers were aware the Confederate battle flag was originally flown from the state Capitol in the early 1960s by then Gov. George Wallace, as a symbol of racist opposition to the movement against Jim Crow segregation. It flew there until 1993, when it was removed by order of a Montgomery judge. Other Selma marchers noted that the so-called "Southern Independence Day" has no connection with any special event in the U.S. Civil War, but was selected by the organizers as a di-

rect counter to the Selma commemoration.

Rev. Joseph Lowery, a leader of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, responded to the Montgomery rally by saying, "We have a message for them. We're not going back. We're just going forward."

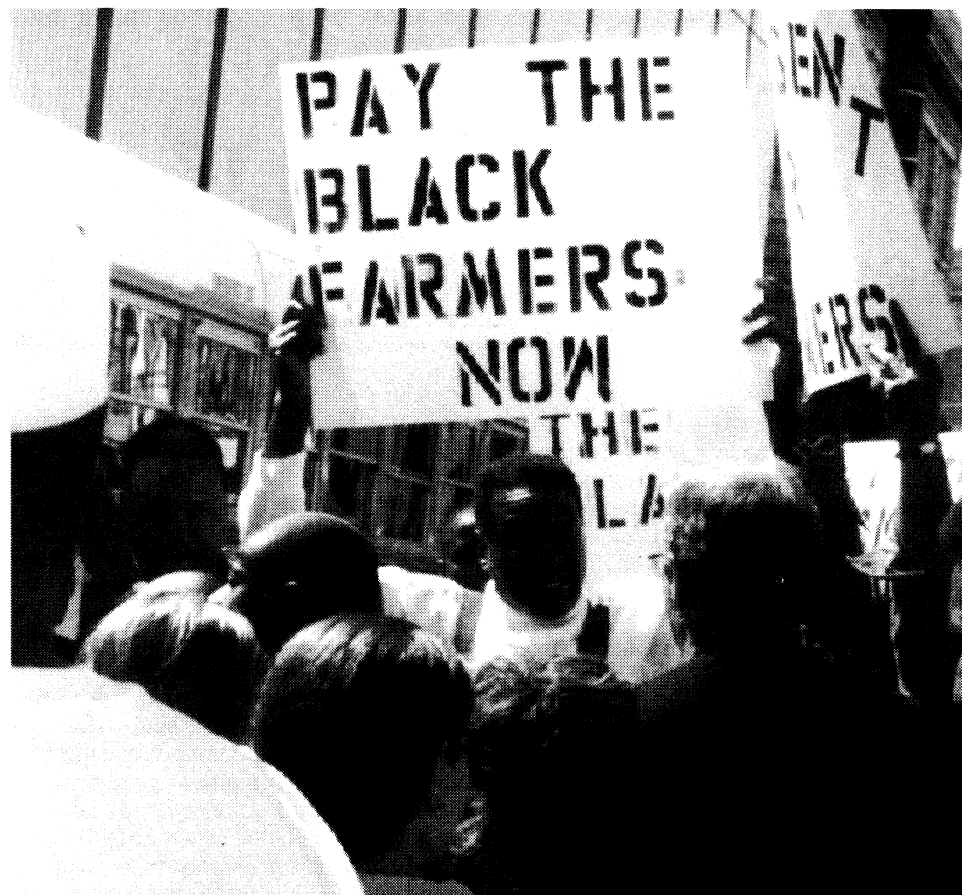
At the Selma march, a group of 20 family farmers who are Black from Clinton, Alabama, in Greene county, participated with signs protesting the policies of the U.S. Agriculture Department and the Clinton administration in relation to farmers. "Pay the Black Farmers Now," said one sign, referring to the duplicitous activities of the government in relation to a settlement in the discrimination lawsuit brought by Black farmers. After admitting years of discriminatory policies, leading in many cases to Blacks losing their land, the government agreed to paying \$50,000 cash awards and debt-relief, but, in more cases than not, has reneged in paying up.

At the pro-Confederate battle flag rally, speeches presented "the South"—in reality Southerners who are white—as historical victims in a world wracked by moral decay and privileges going to the undeserving. Speakers denounced the NAACP, the media, and the federal government.

They worked overtime to claim their rally was not anti-Black, while at the same time peppering their talks with racist code-words.

Michael Hill, president of the League of the South, one of the main sponsors of the racist action, invoked "states rights" in his speech to the crowd. "States rights" was the rationale used by diehard opponents of desegregation, such as Alabama's Gov. George Wallace, when they sought to prevent the end of Jim Crow in the 1960s.

"It's a shame that so many people have to throw out the baby with the bath water here," said Hill. "States rights is a longstanding American principle. Just because it was invoked during the years of segregation—not



Militant/Jacob Fox

Some 20 farmers from Clinton, Alabama, raised their demands for the right to farm at the March 5 commemoration of the 1965 Selma to Montgomery civil rights march.

just in the South but elsewhere—doesn't invalidate that political principle." Hill also acknowledged: "I have no doubt that if I was a Black and some Klansman had waved the battle flag in my face, then I probably wouldn't look on it too kindly. Symbols of all sorts can be misappropriated."

Among the prominent marchers was Johnny Teeter, who scaled the Capitol in January to plant the Confederate battle flag. In an op-ed column leading up to the march, Teeter sounded some of the political themes the rightist forces are using. "Allowing the flag to be removed showed that Alabama will not fight for anything," he wrote. "If we can continue to bow down, then what will they be calling for next? I believe it will be what is left of our freedom."

"We have been losing it for years," he continued. "States have been losing more and more of their rights as socialism continues to creep in. We continue to see hard-earned tax dollars going to people who don't work at all."

Several dozen supporters of Black rights organized a counterprotest to the racist action at the Civil Rights Monument some blocks away. A few people who tried to hold up signs against the Confederate flag at the site of the right-wing action were quickly moved out of the area by cops. Four of them were arrested.

Cindy Jaquith is a member of the United Steelworkers of America in Birmingham, Alabama.

Farmers demand debt relief at USDA office

BY RICARDO ZUNIGA

WASHINGTON, D.C.—"I need debt relief! We want Dan! We want Dan!" chanted a spirited group of 50 farmers here March 6 at the agriculture department headquarters.

The farmers were seeking to meet with U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) director Daniel Glickman about the settlement of a lawsuit in which the government admitted to a wide-ranging pattern of racist discrimination against farmers who are Black. Farmers from Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina joined the protest.

A group of 11 farmers tried to enter the building to see Glickman but were denied access by security and other officials. Cheered on by supporters, the farmers staged a sit-in at the entrance to the USDA office. Policemen from various agencies moved in, arrested the demonstrators, and took them away in a police van. The 11 farmers were later released after being processed and paying a \$50 fine.

The demonstration showed the continued determination of the farmers, led by the Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association.

William Miller, a farmer from Marshallville, Georgia, said he has "been in turmoil with the USDA since 1981. I was in the 1963 [civil rights] march on Washington, I drove a tractor in the 1979 tractorcade to D.C., and have 15 years in the United Auto Workers union at Ford. I will keep on fighting. I am not going anywhere."

Although the government has begun approving applications for compensation and making payments, farmers here explained that discrimination continues and some farms have been foreclosed on by the USDA.

According to the lead attorney in the class-action lawsuit, approximately 40 percent of the plaintiffs have been denied compensation from the settlement. In addition, the average debt relief by those that are receiving payment is only \$17,500.

Richard Settles, Jr., said the delay is worrisome, because "farmers need to begin planting in the latter part of March. The way

this is going we will still be in the adjudicators office in November."

A group of six young people who were walking by joined the protest after finding out more about the demonstrators' demands. Many other groups of young people periodically would stop and watch the farmers picket and chant.

Among the 11 arrested were Lloyd Shaffer from Benton, Mississippi, who was one of the lead plaintiffs in the Pigford vs. Glickman class-action suit. He and Linda Shaffer said they were the first to enter into an agreement with the government in November 1998. "Fourteen months later we still have only received two-thirds of our

money. Neither the attorney nor the USDA will tell us where the rest of it is," he said.

"We were used by them, plain and simple," continued Shaffer, "and now we want to tell our story to others. To make matters worse we were denied a loan this year. We didn't know because we trusted the government. We farmed out of our pocket last year. This year our money is in the field but we can't farm or pay taxes without the loan. Meanwhile, the USDA has us where they want us. But we won't be quiet."

Arlene Rubenstein, a member of the International Association of Machinists in Atlanta, contributed to this article.

At Tallahassee rally, farmers discuss Cuba trip

BY MARY ANN SCHMIDT

TALLAHASSEE, Florida—Karl Butts, a farmer from Plant City, Florida, and Gladys Williams, a farmer from Valdosta, Georgia, joined thousands of demonstrators at the March 7 protest here to defend affirmative action.

During the rally at the Florida state capitol, the two farmers set up an information table with a display of photos from their February trip to Cuba. The one-week tour was hosted by the National Association of Small Farmers of that Caribbean country. Three other farmers from Georgia and one from New Jersey joined Butts and Williams on the trip. Material on their table included a press release by the Cuba Vive coalition based in Tampa about upcoming speaking engagements they are organizing in the region, T-shirts, and other information. Many workers and youth stopped by to talk with Butts and Williams about the gains of the Cuban revolution and the need for a worker-farmer alliance here in the United States.

"Cuba is an example of what happens when people take control of their society," Butts told several participants in the march and rally. If workers, farmers, and youth from the United States could see Cuba for themselves, he said, "they would say, 'It has to happen here. We need to make a revolution in this country.'"

Butts explained that in Cuba "all the wealth that is created by the labor of working people is used to the benefit of all society for human needs, not for a few billionaires."

Many people like Regina Ware, who works at a minimum wage job and is from Florida State University, said after meeting Butts and Williams: "All my life, up until now, I believed the Cubans' life was all bad. What Karl is telling me is the opposite of everything I've heard."

"In Cuba, farmers have already won the title to their land and no one can take it away. Here we have no security," Butts explained to a member of the electrical workers union in Pensacola, Florida. The divisions between city and country were lessened by the revolution, Butts said, as resources were directed to develop schools, housing, and health care in the countryside.

Butts said that workers and farmers he met in Cuba "have a social mentality that we don't have here. You always hear good guys finish last. What does that breed? In Cuba good guys are desirable citizens." After more discussion the electrical worker bought a copy of the *Militant* to find out more about Cuba.

Dozens of people signed up for more information about the farmers' speaking engagements in the United States.

Meeting to celebrate life of Don Peterson

BY DOUG JENNESS

ST. PAUL, Minnesota—Donald Peterson, a member of the communist movement for more than 50 years, died here March 12. He was 81 years old.

Donald, who was born and grew up in Duluth in northern Minnesota, joined the Socialist Workers Party in the Twin Cities in the 1940s. For many years he worked as a janitor at Swedish Hospital where he was an active member of the Service Employees International Union.

Peterson first became acquainted with the SWP when he found a copy of the *Militant* newspaper on a bus seat in Duluth. He contacted the party's organization in the Twin Cities and Party leaders Vincent Dunne and Grace Carlson arranged to meet him at a public meeting sponsored by the NAACP where A. Philip Randolph, president of the AFL Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, was speaking. Shortly afterward Donald moved to Minneapolis where he joined the party. In the early 1960s he was a member of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee in the Twin Cities.

As a party member he was noted for rarely missing and always being punctual to membership meetings, including national conventions and conferences, Militant Labor Forums, and union meetings. He regularly helped keep the Labor Bookstore, later called the Pathfinder Bookstore, open. In the early 1990s he served on a committee that helped maintain the library of the SWP branch.

A meeting to celebrate Don's contribution to the communist movement will be held Thurs., March 23 at 7:00 p.m. at the Pathfinder Bookstore, 1569 Sherburne Ave., in St. Paul. Messages can be E-mailed to TC6446325@cs.com or faxed to (651) 645-1674.

Miners convention takes up defense of health and safety

BY JEFF POWERS

LAS VEGAS, Nevada—The mine workers convention here opened March 6 against a backdrop of government and coal company attacks on the right to lifetime health care and pensions for retired miners and surviving spouses, black lung benefits, and layoffs and closures of union-organized mines.

Nearly 650 delegates from United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) locals in the United States and Canada participated in this 52nd convention, as well as hundreds of observers, including many retirees. Delegates voted to make defending the Coal Act and the fight for better pensions the top priorities in the upcoming contract negotiations with the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA), which represents the largest coal companies.

Miners won the right to lifetime health coverage through a nationwide strike in 1946 that ended only when U.S. president Harry Truman agreed to the miners' demands. In 1992 the U.S. Congress passed the Coal Industry Retiree Health Benefit Act (Coal Act), to shore up depleted funds needed to cover the cost of benefits for more than 68,000 retired miners and miners' widows. But since the 1992 law was passed there have been more than 60 challenges to it in court by the coal companies.

More than 11,000 retired and active miners and their families mobilized at rallies throughout the coalfields last September 7–14 to demand, "Keep the Promise, Save the Coal Act."

This outpouring of solidarity put pressure on Congress to approve an allocation of \$68 million from the Abandoned Mine Lands trust fund to one of the retirees health-care funds, called the Combined Benefits Fund, for the fiscal year 2000. This prevented an immediate collapse of the fund. But over the next five years the fund faces a deficit of more than \$250 million.

According to the January-February issue of the *UMWA Journal*, \$346 million is allocated in the "Clinton/Gore budget proposal" for 2001. The *Journal* warned that the union faces "numerous hurdles" to its passage.

In his speech to the convention, UMWA president Cecil Roberts referred to the September mobilizations and mentioned that the UMWA still plans to organize a march in Washington, D.C. This was raised at each of the rallies in the coalfields. The *Journal* reports that the rally will probably take place in "late March or April."

Bosses' antiunion drive

Miners are under attack today not only around the issues of health-care and pension benefits. Thousands of union coal miners have lost their jobs as more of the production of coal is being shifted to nonunion mining operations. This is a life-and-death question for the union. Of the 85,000 miners who are working today approximately one-third are in unions.

The amount of coal produced per worker, per hour has doubled from 1986 to 1997—from 3.01 tons to 6.04 tons per man hour. At the same time, total coal production has risen 18 percent, adding up to fewer miners working longer hours. An influx of young miners are being hired at nonunion mining operations, at wages sometimes as low as \$7.00–\$8.00 per hour. Safety and working conditions are often far below what the union has won through years of struggle against the coal bosses. Thirty-four miners

were killed in coal mine accidents in 1999, up from 29 in 1998. A giant challenge facing the union is the fight to win miners in the unorganized mines into the union.

The report of the Organizing Committee mentioned only one successful organizing drive of coal miners since the last convention, a fight for UMWA representation by 400 miners at the Lodestar Company's Baker mine in western Kentucky. The last convention of the UMWA in 1995 set a GOAL 2000 campaign to increase the strength of the UMWA and lend active support to building other unions. While this was mentioned in the committee report, organizing drives of workers outside of coal mining and related industries were highlighted, including government workers, parking lot attendants, and health-care workers.

A recent example of one of these organizing drives was posted in a press release on the union's web site entitled "UMWA Wins Big Victory in Blair County, Pa." The release said in part: "The UMWA will now represent employees in the domestic relations, juvenile and adult parole and probation, district attorney, public defender, register and recorder, cost and fines, sheriff, district justices and court administrator's offices."

In some cases even prison guards and cops, who are enemies of the working class, have been taken into the UMWA. The *Observer-Reporter*, based in southwestern Pennsylvania, reported that the UMWA has a local in Wyoming that "includes police officers."

Under the report of the Constitution and Grievance Committee, delegates voted to change the provision of the UMWA constitution that limited membership to coal miners and workers in related industries to include all workers. This is a big step backward that further dilutes the industrial character of the union based on coal miners.

Union fighters

Many retirees in the UMWA are union fighters, and this was evident at the convention. Lewis Fitch, an 80-year-old retired miner from Illinois, spent all four days of the convention staffing a literature table and buttonholing delegates, urging people to get involved in the fight for benefits. Black lung (pneumoconiosis) is a disease that comes from the inhalation of coal dust. Fitch, president of the National Black Lung Association, told the *Militant* that 1,500 miners die each year from this completely preventable disease. Miners won recognition of black lung as an occupational disease and the right to disability benefits through massive strikes and demonstrations in the late 1960s and early 1970s. "But today, only 7 percent of those who apply for benefits win approval of their claims," Fitch explained.

The Black Lung Association has chapters in 12 states. The Illinois chapter meets every three weeks to be able to involve working miners, explained Jim Norman, an organizer for the Illinois chapter.

Miners have been involved in strikes and walkouts for the past 18 months to resist company and government assaults on their union. These include anthracite miners who struck Jeddo Coal Co. near Hazleton, Pennsylvania, for about a year to win a contract; miners at Freeman United in central Illinois, who walked out for several months against the company's drive to reduce their health-care benefits; and miners in Rangle, Colorado, who struck the Deserado mine for



Militant/Elyse Hathaway

Retired coal miners initiated a spirited rally March 7 to kick off second day of convention. Retirees have played a central role in the UMWA's fight for health and safety.

three months.

Miners in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, struck for two weeks in January against Devco, a Canadian government-owned corporation. "The miners shut down the last operational coal mine," said Stephen Drake, president of UMWA District 26 in Canada, and the final speaker on the last day of the convention. "They shut down the coal trains, the coal boats, and the coal trucks. Seven UMWA brothers slipped underground and went on a hunger strike six miles under the Atlantic Ocean." The strike ended only when federal government officials agreed to form a joint committee with the union to discuss improvements in the pension package, which had excluded many miners.

Job actions at mines

In discussions at the convention, miners told of job actions at mines like the Drummond company's Shoal Creek mine in Alabama, where miners walked off the job on February 23 to protest the threatened firing of a union member. Ed Pinegar of UMWA Local 1948 described how the company then closed the mine for five days in retaliation. Miners have since returned to work winning back the job of the union brother. Walkouts like the one over safety and contract issues at the Maple Creek mine in Bentleyville, Pennsylvania, have also taken place.

A number of these fighters said they appreciated the *Militant* for its truthful reporting on their struggles and other labor battles.

During the convention hundreds of miners joined with members of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees for a picket outside the Venetian Hotel, a big resort in Las Vegas that has resisted unionization efforts. Democratic Party politician Jesse Jackson addressed the lunchtime demonstration, and the convention session later that afternoon.

AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer Richard Trumka, a past president of the UMWA, addressed the convention delegates. He urged the union to join with other AFL-CIO unions in campaigning for the Democratic Party presidential candidate Albert Gore, although not once mentioning Gore's name. The response was less than enthusiastic, reflecting the fact that Gore is unpopular with many miners. Posing as a defender of the environment, Gore is a supporter of international global warming treaties that call for sharply restricting coal production. Videotaped greetings were also presented throughout the convention from a host of Demo-

cratic Party officeholders, including Sen. Robert Byrd and Sen. John D. Rockefeller of West Virginia and Sen. Paul Wellstone of Minnesota.

Under Trumka's leadership in the mid-1980s, the miners' union adopted a selective strike strategy breaching a long-held tradition of "no contract—no work" that dated back at least to the 1930s. Many miners believe that this strategy led to the 1984–85 defeat at A.T. Massey, as well as other setbacks to the union.

In speeches to the convention, Roberts and other top International officers placed blame for the layoffs of union miners on implementation of the Clean Air Act, and other environmental restrictions against the mountaintop removal method of strip mining. This stance of the UMWA leadership is a retreat from positions the union began to address in the 1970s around strip mining, reclamation, and against the use of nuclear power.

An important note was raised by a delegate from Virginia who took the floor for a point of special privilege on Wednesday. "I want to speak about a union brother who happened to be in the right place at the wrong time," he said. "He is my cousin—Jerry Lowe—who was wrongfully convicted of something he didn't do."

Lowe, a member of UMWA Local 5958, was a picket captain at Arch Coal during the 1993 BCOA strike. He was imprisoned following the strike. Roberts also mentioned that Donnie Thornsby, convicted along with others in December 1987 on frame-up charges of killing a scab coal hauler during the A.T. Massey strike, remains in jail today.

The convention was convened early to seek an early opening of negotiations with the BCOA. The current UMWA-BCOA contract expires on Dec. 31, 2002. BCOA members include the Peabody Group, Arch Coal Inc., CONSOL Energy, and Zeigler Coal Holding, now owned by AEI Resources. Other companies are expected to sign similar contracts based on whatever contract is settled between the union and the BCOA.

The convention approved a proposal to eliminate the office of International vice president. UMWA International secretary-treasurer Carlo Tarley reported that the district structure of the union had been reduced from 15 districts to 9 in 1996, eliminating many paid positions. The delegates also voted to move up the date for election of new International officers from November of 2002 to Nov. 14, 2000.

Shoal Creek miners reverse firing

BY CINDY JAQUITH

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama—The coal miner whose firing sparked a wildcat strike at the Shoal Creek mine has won his job back.

On February 23, members of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) staged a one-day walkout at the mine, 40 miles from here, to protest the firing of their coworker on charges of insubordination.

Less than eight hours into the strike, the mine's owner, Drummond Co., began calling the next shift to inform workers they should not come in; the mine was closed down.

Drummond kept the miners out of work for five days, then reopened the mine. The fired worker is back on the job.

The Shoal Creek facility is the only Drummond mine left in Alabama after the company shut down its other operations. It is one of six UMWA-organized mines remaining in the state.

Editor's note: A headline in the March 13 Militant, "Miners strike in Alabama over closures," inaccurately described the reason for the strike, which—as explained in the article—was in response to the firing, not mine closures.

Coal Miners ON STRIKE



COAL MINERS ON STRIKE

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Cape Breton miners tell story of their fight

'Our union has fought to defend the pensions and jobs of its membership'

BY CHRIS REMPLE

LAS VEGAS, Nevada—"Cape Breton coal miners refused to take a backward step. They successfully choked off the coal supply to the entire province of Nova Scotia and unless the government agreed to negotiate, were ready to plunge the province into darkness," said mine workers official Stephen Drake at the union's convention here.

"It was a long overdue wake-up call to the policy makers that the light switches in the halls of power are directly connected to the lights on the hard-hats of UMWA coal miners," said Drake, who is president of

District 26 of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). He addressed the convention on its closing day and told the story of their fight.

In December the government coal corporation, Devco, closed the Phalen mine. The Prince mine will be the last to be closed. All miners under age 50 by December 2000 will be ineligible for pension payments and will receive only severance pay despite more than 20 years of service in many cases.

The Cape Breton miners stood up to the federal government and 150 Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) in their fight to protect the pensions of miners laid off in

the closing of the Nova Scotia coal industry. Over the course of the last six years, the federal government, through Devco, has moved to dismantle and close down the coal mines in Nova Scotia. While the union has made some concessions, it has fought to defend the pensions and jobs of its membership.

"In December," Drake reported, "our union fired the final warning shot across the coal company's bow. Three hundred members occupied corporate headquarters and shut it down. The government and Devco refused to negotiate in good faith. On the first working day of the new millennium, our members wildcatted the coal company and defied federal back-to-work orders and federal injunctions. They had taken all they could take."

"For two weeks in January, the eyes of our nation were focused on the coal miners' battle for justice in Cape Breton Island," he continued. "The miners shut down the last operational coal mine. They shut down the coal trains, the coal boats, and the coal trucks. Seven UMWA brothers slipped underground and went on a hunger strike six miles under the Atlantic Ocean."

'Get government's attention'

Terry Binder, one of the miners who occupied the mine said, "We had a legal strike for five days, but there was no movement. We had to do something to get the attention of the government. So we decided to break into the mine. At midnight we snuck in and went down into the mine and stayed there for six days."

Drake explained in an interview, "Faced with this, the minister of Natural Resources said he would meet with us. We met in Ottawa from 11:30 in the morning to 10:30 at night. In the end they blinked and we won. At 7:45 that night, the government position was no guaranteed planning committee and only unspecified incremental improvements. We thanked everyone but said it wasn't good enough. We said we were going to the media and to the phones to tell our picket lines to dig in. And we got up to leave."

At that point, the government said they could make some concessions. "We said we would give them 24 hours. Trucks on the

road, coal to the power plants. But no more. If we couldn't settle by then, we would shut down the whole province," Drake said.

Pressed by the government negotiators to sign an agreement, Drake and the union team refused. "They wanted us to sign then and there," he said, "But we said no. We'll fax this to our guys and let them read it. Friday morning we'll have a meeting and take a vote."

Binder explained, "We decided we would go on a hunger strike. Talks were going to break off that night. But by the next morning negotiations were okayed. At the meeting the next day, 87 percent voted OK."

The miners faced down federal cops. "They said they had 150 RCMP ready to clear us out of the mine," stated Drake. "We told them we had a list of 500 miners who would be there with baseball bats and hockey helmets."

"They sent in 150 mounties from upper Nova Scotia and put them in a hotel for four days," Binder said. "They told us that if everything was not resolved in a few days they were coming in. The miners said, 'Come on. We'll be ready for it.' The RCMP told us, 'Here's the way it is. If we come here tomorrow and there are 200 miners, we're taking you out of here. But if there are 500 miners and women and children, we're going home.'"

Regarding his own situation, Binder explained, "I've got five years from the end of the year for a pension. I've been in the mines for 23 years. The pension is only \$22,000 and welfare is \$21,000."

He concluded, "There are 100 million tons of coal accessible now at the Prince mine. There's a whole new mine, the shafts are there, and it's never been touched. It has 60 years of work. The mine we just closed has 800,000 tons there. But the federal government is closing out steel and the provincial government is closing out coal."

"Our fight is about justice for coal miners. Our fight is about retirement with dignity," Drake told the delegates. "They may sell off our coal mines and try to take away our jobs. They may try to force us to leave our beautiful island in search of work. But they will never, never, never take away our union or the fighting spirit of Cape Breton coal miners."

Garment workers rally for union rights



Militant/Carole Lesnick

Members of UNITE rally for a union at RCR Classic design in Los Angeles. After workers voted for the union five months ago, the company began demanding immigration papers as a way to bust the union.

'La Gaceta' describes '70s, Cuba's 'gray half-decade'

BY MIKE TABER

The November-December 1999 issue of *La Gaceta de Cuba* is currently available in Pathfinder bookstores. Published bimonthly in Spanish by the Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba (UNEAC), *La Gaceta* is Cuba's leading literary and cultural magazine.

Among the features in this issue is an interview with noted Cuban poet Luis Marré, who for 18 years was managing editor of *La Gaceta de Cuba*.

Active in left-wing literary circles during the 1950s, Marré was drawn to the revolutionary fight against the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. "I considered myself in debt to the revolution," he recounts. "I had been against Batista and my sympathies were with the revolutionary movement. I participated in some demonstrations against the government, including the one in which the student Rubén Batista was fatally wounded."

"None of that seemed sufficient in 1959, and in fact it wasn't. That's why I went to the Swamp," he states, referring to the Zapata Swamp in south-central Cuba. At the time of the revolution, this area was one of the most backward and underdeveloped parts of the country.

Marré volunteered to go there and work as an accountant on a state farm. He also joined the militia there, participating in the battle against the 1961 U.S.-sponsored invasion at the nearby Bay of Pigs, and in the fight against armed counterrevolutionary bands in the Escambray mountains.

In 1962 Marré moved back to Havana, where he wrote scripts for radio programs. While enrolled as a journalism student at the University of Havana, he became managing editor of *La Gaceta de Cuba*.

"My first surprise was encountering a magazine without journalists, only writers, some of them very talented," he states. "At that time contributors weren't paid, and this minimized variety since the various issues did not always contain the number of signed articles we would have liked. I'll add that this was a magazine without a regular publication schedule; it came out when God willed—it was very religious in that sense—because in those days printshops gave priority to textbooks and notebooks for education."

"Part of those 18 years coincided with the so-called 'gray half-decade' or 'black decade,' a stage of sharp ideological confrontation and when many writers were prevented from publishing; they could not even be mentioned," Marré points out. The term "gray period" is often used in Cuba to refer to the five years between 1971 and 1976, when economic, as well as cultural, practices copied from the Soviet bureaucracy had great weight.

"You never knew precisely which writer was 'clean' and which one wasn't," Marré states. "You had to consult constantly. Nothing was ever put in writing, nor were meetings held. Sometimes we would commit a blunder because a writer suddenly became 'dirty' just as the issue was going to press, and there was no way to turn back. You never knew exactly what it was that was held against a writer. Perhaps he had made a joke, perhaps he was a homosexual, or perhaps he hadn't done anything at all but it was suspected that he might say something at any moment. A list was drawn up of prohibited writers, some of them first-rate."

In the late 1970s, Marré recounts, the situ-

ation began to change.

"In 1976 the Ministry of Culture was created with Armando Hart at the helm, and the black period began to be a thing of the past. The payment of royalties was approved and *La Gaceta* was enriched with new writers."

"Then other problems arose. *La Gaceta* was turned into a news bulletin, a circulator of dated news and unreadable speeches that no one was interested in. With the exception of Nicolás Guillén, the entire UNEAC executive board wanted *La Gaceta* to reflect the life of the organization. That stage ended, and an even worse one began. *La Gaceta* then became a huckstering magazine to compete with other publications, like *Opina*, reflecting the worst of popular art. This was during the economic period in the country, and it was demanded that everything bring money into UNEAC's coffers, at whatever price. Some of those issues still make me ashamed."

What about today? "The best stage of *La Gaceta* is the present one, and I have often said so. Today's *La Gaceta* is the magazine I would have liked to put out when I was there."

Carlos Varela

Another feature of this issue of *La Gaceta de Cuba* is an interview with Carlos Varela, one of Cuba's best-known singers.

In it Varela discusses some of the difficulties his generation of artists has had in dealing with some of the economic transformations in Cuba over the last decade.

"A situation of everybody out for themselves came about, not as a result of selfishness but as the only way to survive," he says. "It was the end of the 1980s, and Cuba was

changing. Everyone wanted to create their own band, get their own instruments, organize their own tours.... We were all fighting hard to get our songs out, and as always, the results weren't the same for everyone."

Varela adds, "The market has pressured many artists to leave Cuba. One would also have to think and ask oneself whether they abandoned Cuba or Cuba abandoned them. History will tell."

"Many people wagered that I would leave Cuba. Not now, but during the most difficult years, which was the end of the 1980s. Everything my songs have given me, for good or for bad, are the result of trying to ignore what other people think. I believe I have been consistent in this. I have defended my work by hook or by crook, without concessions, and this has its price. I've often been urged to renounce the country and go into other markets." But, he says, "I have only tried to defend my work from inside this island, and I will continue doing so."

"In defending my songs I am defending my right to be free, to think as I want and to be as I want, not as others want me to be."

Martínez Villena centennial

The November-December issue also features an essay by Fernando Martínez Heredia on the centennial of the birth of Rubén Martínez Villena. Martínez Villena was a Cuban poet who became a leader of the Communist Party of Cuba in the late 1920s and early 1930s. He died in 1934.

Martínez Villena grew up in the wake of the U.S. occupation of Cuba in the early 20th century. His generation was formed politically under the influence of the fight for Cuba's sovereignty and against U.S. imperialism.

Book tells of early years of communist movement in U.S.

The following is the preface by Jack Barnes to *The History of American Trotskyism*. The first edition of the book by James P. Cannon was published in 1944. The third edition, in which the preface below appears, was published in 1995 after it was scanned into digital form by volunteers. It is the latest book produced in Pathfinder's printshop and is now once again available for orders through the publishing house. Copyright © by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission.

BY JACK BARNES

In this sequence of twelve public talks given in 1942 in New York City, James P. Cannon recounts a formative—and heroic—chapter in the effort to build a proletarian party in the United States.

Beginning with three talks summarizing the initial efforts to found a communist party that aspired to emulate the Bolsheviks in the years following the Russian revolution, Cannon concentrates in this book on the period following the expulsion from the Workers (Communist) Party of America in 1928 of those veteran communists who opposed the growing Stalinization of the party leadership and supported the fight led by Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky to continue V.I. Lenin's communist course. Cannon takes the story up to New Year's 1938, when the communist organization in the United States took the name Socialist Workers Party.

Two decades after he gave these talks, in *The First Ten Years of American Communism* Cannon returned to a more detailed account of the earlier period in the history of the Marxist movement in the United States, once again from the standpoint of a leading participant. Published in 1962, *The First Ten Years of American Communism* traces in greater detail the years from the Bolshevik-led revolution of 1917 until 1928. In the process, Cannon reaffirms the summary conclusions on the roots of the communist movement in the United States and the character of its pioneers first presented in these 1942 lectures.

Cannon was born in Rosedale, Kansas, in 1890 and joined the Socialist Party at the

age of eighteen. A traveling organizer for the Industrial Workers of the World before and during World War I and a leader of the working-class left wing of the Socialist Party, he became a founding leader of the communist movement in the United States following the Russian revolution. He was a member of the presidium of the executive committee of the Communist International in Moscow and then a delegate to the Fourth Congress of the Communist International during the seven months he was in Soviet Russia from June 1922 to January 1923. He later served as executive secretary of the International Labor Defense, a committee in the United States that fought for the release of prisoners framed up for their militancy in the working-class movement. Cannon was a founding leader in 1928 of the Communist League of America, which evolved into the Socialist Workers Party in 1938. He served as SWP national secretary until 1953, when he became the party's national chairman, and then, in 1972, national chairman emeritus until the time of his death in 1974.

On December 8, 1941, just a few months before he presented these talks, Cannon and seventeen other leaders and cadres of the Socialist Workers Party and of Local 544-CIO (formerly Teamsters Local 544) had been sentenced to prison on frame-up charges in a federal court in Minneapolis, Minnesota, because of their active opposition within the U.S. labor movement to



On Dec. 31, 1943, Socialist Workers Party members march from their headquarters in Minneapolis to the federal courthouse to serve sentences. Eighteen were jailed for opposing Washington's entry into World War II. *History of America Trotskyism* author, James P. Cannon, walks at the left shoulder of lead marcher, Vincent Dunne.

Washington's joining in the imperialist slaughter of World War II. The U.S. Court of Appeals upheld the verdict and sentences in late 1943. Cannon was imprisoned for sixteen months in the federal penitentiary at Sandstone, Minnesota, and was released in early 1945. The appeals court also affirmed the convictions of the other seventeen defendants, all of whom were imprisoned for similar terms.

Readers of *The History of American Trotskyism* will be interested in *The Left Opposition in the U.S., 1928-31* and *The Communist League of America, 1932-34*, which include writings and speeches by

Cannon from a substantial portion of the period covered in this book. Other writings by Cannon include *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*, *Notebook of an Agitator*, *Socialism on Trial*, *Letters from Prison*, *The Socialist Workers Party in World War II*, *Speeches to the Party*, and *Speeches for Socialism*. All these titles, as well as *The First Ten Years of American Communism*, are available from Pathfinder.

This fiftieth anniversary edition of *The History of American Trotskyism* restores Cannon's original subtitle "Report of a participant" and includes the original 1944 introduction by Socialist Workers Party leader Joseph Hansen. The text has been scanned and reset for this third edition.

Cannon's account is an essential companion not only to his *First Ten Years of American Communism*, but also to the article "Their Trotsky and Ours: Communist Continuity Today," published in 1983 in the inaugural issue of the Marxist magazine *New Internationalist*. All three of these works take as their starting point the Bolshevik perspective Cannon stated in the opening sentences of these 1942 talks: "Trotskyism is not a new movement, a new doctrine, but the restoration, the revival, of genuine Marxism as it was expounded and practiced in the Russian revolution and in the early days of the Communist International."

from Pathfinder

The History of American Trotskyism Report of a Participant, 1928-38

James P. Cannon

"Trotskyism is not a new movement, a new doctrine," Cannon says, "but the restoration, the revival of genuine Marxism as it was expounded and practiced in the Russian revolution and in the early days of the Communist International." In this series of twelve talks given in 1942, James P. Cannon recounts an important chapter in the efforts to build a proletarian party in the United States. \$18.95

Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 8

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

MASSACHUSETTS

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Defend Affirmative Action: Tens of Thousands Rally in Florida to Oppose Racism. Speaker: Andrea Morell, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., March 24, 7:30 p.m. *Codman Square, 683 Washington St., Dorchester.* Donation: \$4. Tel: (617) 282-2254.

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Protest Renewed U.S. Bombing of Vieques! Oppose New Agreement between Washington and Governor of Puerto Rico. Speakers: Fermin Morales, National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War; Luz Tirado, former Vieques resident whose family is active in fight there to oust the U.S. Navy; Daphne Tufino, Latinos United, Girls High School; Amaris Hernández, SALSA, Central High School; Peter Seidman, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., March 24, 7:30 p.m. *711 E. Passyunk Ave. (Two blocks south of South and Fifth streets.)* Donation: \$5. For more information, call (215) 627-1237.

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A Working-Class Solution to the Crisis in Transport. Fri., March 24, 7:00 p.m. *47 The Cut.* Donation: £2.

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OK, now check out the Dems—Rick Cobb, a “Human Resources” chap, says that if Republican presidential aspirants were interviewed for a job, none of them would get hired. They’re



Harry Ring

too windy, they duck questions, and they sound rehearsed and insincere.

Yet they run loose—The New Orleans sheriff’s office said it’s looking into the charge that a deputy stalled for 30 minutes writing up a traffic ticket. The driver was headed to a hospital with his uncle who was having a heart attack. The deputy reportedly finished writing the ticket and said, “Go ahead and have your heart attack or stroke now. Have a good day.”

Woofs extra—“There are 55 million pet dogs in America, and about 10 percent of them die every year. If just a tenth of 1 per-

cent of dog owners are willing to fork over \$1,000 each for a chance to get their dying pet cloned, then there are millions of dollars to be made.”—Lou Hawthorne, founder of Genetic Savings and Clone.

Maybe they learn more—The headline on a Denver *Post* clipping read: “Study says child care hard to find.” Snorting, “What else is new?” we aimed it toward the circular file. But a marked paragraph caught our eye: “...in 15 states, the average cost of day care can be nearly twice the annual cost of college tuition.”

Thought it was your nerves?—Commercials and “public service announcements” took a record slice of TV time last year. In 1991 ABC had 13.04 minutes per hour. This past year ABC set the record by squeezing on 16.57 minutes per hour.

Run by unclean officials—“Unclean hospitals killing 5,000 a year.”—Headline, the *Times*, London.

Wonder which kids they are?—A study found that children living near heavily traveled high-

ways or streets are as much as six times more likely to suffer from cancer or leukemia.

Random chance—Denver cops were issued 178 no-knock warrants last year. The city’s population is 44 percent non-Anglo, but they were targeted for 82 percent of the Gestapo-type raids.

‘Es su casa’—A study commissioned by the Catholic hierarchy concluded that Latino Catholics are twice as likely as other Catholics to worship in “separate and unequal settings.”

Proletarian party must be built prior to big battles

The excerpt below is taken from the discussion period after the talk entitled “So Far From God, So Close to Orange County,” which was presented to a regional socialist educational conference in Los Angeles over the 1994-95 New Year’s weekend. The entire talk appears in *Capitalism’s World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*. Copyright © 1999 Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission.

COMMENT: From your talk I drew that we’ve entered a different kind of period now. The attacks on the working class are much broader, much more widespread. The collapse of capitalism is accelerating. And there is going to be a response by the working class.

So my question is, do you conclude from this that communists also need to begin taking a different approach from that of the last decade—a more agitational approach? Not just explanation, but more agitation, in your press and in your other political work?

JACK BARNES: I don’t think I would call it a new stage. I am cautious about “stages.”

from the pages of *Capitalism’s World Disorder*

And I am cautious about a global acceleration of a capitalist collapse. But what is unavailable is this: the long-term deflationary bias and instability of capitalism are increasing. The enemy is showing more vulnerable spots, even as they deliver blows to our class. Conditions are more volatile. They affect working people and broad layers of the middle classes all over the world in more unexpected ways, bringing greater insecurity and uncertainty into their lives.

Ten days ago, none of us in this room expected what was going to happen in Mexico. But at the same time, we also knew it was bound to happen, didn’t we? That is a sign of the times we are living in.

Nobody can predict the “when”; that is unpredictable. Revolutionary workers do not hold ourselves accountable for that. But we can make one ultimately fatal mistake. We can wait until conditions “reach a new stage” before getting serious about building a disciplined proletarian party. By then it is too late. By then, it is no longer possible to redeem the time that has been lost.

The history of the twentieth century teaches us that during periods of rising class battles and revolutionary struggles, a small communist nucleus can grow into a large political force very rapidly. But that is only possible if an initial communist nucleus has been built beforehand. It has to be a nucleus that is proletarian not only in its political program and continuity, but also in the composition of the big majority of its membership and leadership.

It has to organize not only through rounded, self-confident, political branch units, but also through structured groups of communist workers in the major industrial workplaces—what we call union fractions in the communist movement.

The worker cadres of such a communist organization need to have gone through substantial experience in the working-class movement beforehand. They must have engaged in strikes and social protest activity with others and gained confidence in debating counterposed strategies and perspec-



Militant/Osborne Hart

“The history of the twentieth century teaches us that during periods of rising class battles and revolutionary struggles, a small communist nucleus can grow into a large political force very rapidly. But that is only possible if an initial communist nucleus has been built beforehand.... It has to organize not only through rounded, self-confident, political branch units, but also through structured groups of communist workers in the major industrial workplaces.” Above, members of United Mine Workers of America, United Rubber Workers, and others rally in Washington, D.C., Sept. 19, 1981, demanding better health care and safer conditions on the job.

tives. They must have experience in talking socialism with co-workers and organizing around a weekly rhythm of political activity. They must be pros in getting revolutionary newspapers, books, and pamphlets into the hands of other fighters and winning workers and revolutionary-minded young people to the communist movement.

Once big class battles and revolutionary struggles break out, it is too late to start building from scratch. If the time beforehand has been redeemed, then the cadres of a communist organization will have had enough experience to have internalized revolutionary proletarian politics in their gut. They will provide self-confident leadership and fight alongside other workers with a bolshevik discipline that comes from within themselves: from years of experience, education, and preparation. They will have developed the habits of discipline, including the habits of study and the discipline to think systematically. They will not be dependent on the formulas of sects. They will not rely on or trust any bureaucratic apparatus ultimately beholden to the exploiting classes.

Revolutionary-minded workers must learn to read broadly, to take complicated questions seriously and work at them—and to study together with co-workers, youth, and newly won members of the communist movement. The capitalist rulers do everything they can to confuse workers, to make us believe we must rely on experts, wizards, and pollsters. They try to obfuscate—about economics, about stocks and bonds, about the monarchy in Britain, about the church in Poland, about class relations in the United States, about education and wage differentials, you name it.

The unexpected consequences of the peso’s devaluation were not some “Mexican thing,” however. We will see more such breakdowns and panics in today’s deflationary conditions. The imperialist bourgeoisie in its decline has no plans, no overarching strategy. But at the same time, everything we see beginning to unravel is also the inevitable outcome of the lawful workings of the capitalist system.

What is important for communist work-

ers is to begin preparing now—not to wait for it to happen. There is no way to prepare for it. Because neither we nor anybody else knows, or can know, what it is going to be.

Workers have to fight to get out of the framework the capitalists try to impose on every social and political question. It is not possible for workers to come to the necessary revolutionary conclusions alone, without exchanging experiences and ideas with other revolutionary workers and without reading and studying and discussing what the lessons of our class have been over more than a century of struggles in scores of countries all over the world.

We have to think, to discuss, to plan, to organize—to broaden our scope. It takes time and work—and it takes a revolutionary party.

This is the kind of organization the So-

cialist Workers Party set out to build from the beginning, as you can document for yourself in books such as *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party* by James P. Cannon, and the four-volume Teamsters series by Farrell Dobbs. The best single guide to party-building in the world our class has been facing since the mid-1970s is *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics: Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions*. All these books are the heart of the revolutionary political arsenal kept in print by Pathfinder Press.

Yes, we also have to agitate when it’s timely to do so. But we do not counterpose agitation to political explanation—which communist workers will continue to do, and to do more of, as the pace of the class struggle picks up. We should never forget that it was during the biggest revolutionary situation in this century, in the months just after the collapse of the tsarist regime in Russia in February 1917, that Lenin taught the ranks of the Bolsheviks that their task above all was “to patiently explain”; their task was to convince the working class of what it was capable of accomplishing by organizing for the conquest of power and breaking politically with all the misleaders who stood in the way of doing so.¹

Today, we have to work to understand and to explain to other workers why capitalism is becoming more unstable, why this will not be reversed by reforms, why big class battles are inevitable, and why we must organize collectively—as an international class—to overturn this exploitative social system.

If the nucleus of the revolutionary working class does not prepare beforehand, if we do not effectively use the time we have right now, then the odds shift against our class being successful when revolutionary situations develop. If we understand this, then we can see the truth of what the communist movement has said ever since the rise of fascism in this century: that before reaction can conquer, the workers get the first chance.

1. See the April 1917 articles, “The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution” and “Letter on Tactics” in Lenin’s *Collected Works*, vol. 24, pp. 19-26, 42-54.

—25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—



March 28, 1975

WASHINGTON—“If all this sounds like a mixture of the late Joseph McCarthy and the worst of Watergate, that’s not surprising. The FBI may have called it ‘counterintelligence,’ but it reads a lot like lies and libel.”

This is how CBS national news reporter Bruce Morton closed his morning broadcast March 19 on the 3,138 pages of secret FBI files on the Socialist Workers party and Young Socialist Alliance. The files were made public at a news conference here March 19 by the Political Rights Defense Fund (PRDF).

Pointing to the two-foot-high stack of documents, PRDF National Secretary Syd Stapleton told reporters, “Here we have in J. Edgar Hoover’s own words the proof of a sweeping illegal campaign to destroy two legal organizations, the SWP and YSA, and to disrupt the civil rights, antiwar, and students movements.”



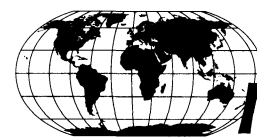
March 27, 1950

CHICAGO, March 20—With a cynical statement charging the victims themselves engineered the Peoria St. riot last November, Municipal Judge Joseph H. McGarry last week freed the final defendants charged with mob violence against Negroes.

Judge McGarry claimed the Peoria St. affair was an “organized incident” and a “miserable conspiracy hatched and put into effect by a small but highly organized vocal group of subversive agents, professional agitators and saboteurs.”

The conspirators, he claimed, were the occupants of the Peoria St. house themselves! He alleged their agents posed as neighbors and whipped up the riot in order to discredit the city government, police and courts.

He also ignored the evidence of the NAACP, the Urban League, trade union leaders and scores of other local organizations and individuals who have been aroused to action by the riot and other attacks on minorities.



Support farmers' struggle

Continued from front page

dropper. One example is West Virginia. Some \$40 million in federal grants is available from the government for drought-related losses. Total reported damages: \$200 million. A West Virginia farmer is only eligible for a \$2,500 maximum in grants. Rice farmers in Louisville, Kentucky, don't even get compensated for their losses because of a law passed to not pay farmers whose crops are normally irrigated.

- Prices U.S. dairy farmers receive for milk has been driven down by 40 percent since last September. In the Northeast, farmers are paid just over half the cost to produce a hundredweight of milk. While prices paid to hog farmers have risen from all-time lows, some 14,000 hog farmers were still driven out of business last year.

- Fuel prices are at a 20-year high, a major expense for farmers.

- There are signs of widening poverty in rural areas, as hospitals, wages, and social services are cut.

At the same time working farmers and their families are going through ever-toughening conditions, capitalist politicians are pushing legislation to increase the profit margins of the rich farmers and agribusiness giants. The government just lifted any cap on the yearly subsidy an individual can receive, which is just a massive boon to wealthy growers and agribusiness. Most farmers receive a paltry amount each year in support payments of any kind.

Farmers who are Black—hit hardest by the crisis due to racist discrimination on top of miserly loan policies of the government—have been part of a vanguard fighting to hold onto their land. The Washington, D.C., rally will give them the opportunity to join forces with other layers of fighters against foreclosures. This also deals a blow to divisions and prejudices the rulers try to sow among farmers.

Farmers have a crucial ally in their fight against debt slavery—the working class. The mood among working people—just like the farmers—has also shifted towards resistance, towards solidarity. Toilers increasingly see skirmishes in their plants as part of a larger fight for dignity and the right to work in a safe environment.

The rulers would have farmers believe that the cause of

their plight rests with toilers of another nation or a foreign country. But working farmers and peasants around the world face similar crises and are part of struggles right now against a common exploiter. Tens of thousands of landless peasants in Brazil are fighting for land. Farmers in the Republic of Ireland have picketed packinghouses for higher prices. We should draw on each others examples around the world and see them as part of the same fight.

The root cause of the conditions farmers face from Memphis, Tennessee, to Donegal, Ireland, is capitalism. The only road toward ending the pauperization of rural toilers is to build a revolutionary movement of workers and farmers that has the imagination, capacity, courage, and leadership to throw off the system of capitalism like an old coat. This proletarian movement can then turn toward the enormous task of building socialism and reversing the cancerous effects capitalism has had on humanity and the earth on which we live.

Working people and the unions should demand:

Immediate federal cash grants for all farmers devastated by the drought!

A guaranteed market for farmers' crops and livestock with prices adequate to meet production costs and provide a decent living!

Abolish small and middle farmers' debts owed to the banks and the government!

Cheap credit to working farmers who need it, with special preference to those who need it most. No discrimination against Black, Latino, or Asian farmers!

Guaranteed government-funded crop and livestock insurance with 100 percent protection against so-called natural disasters!

End property taxes. Institute a sharply graduated income tax that puts the burden on the rich, not workers and farmers!

Create committees of farmers and workers chosen by unions, farm organizations, and consumer groups to police the prices and profits of supermarkets and big business producers. This can help counter attempts to use commodity prices to divide workers and farmers and expose the bosses' practice of paying farmers bargain-basement prices for a product, then shooting up the price at supermarkets.

Washington yields on IMF head

Following unanimous backing by the European Union, U.S. president William Clinton gave Washington's endorsement to Horst Koehler, the German government's nominee to head the International Monetary Fund. Clinton scuttled Germany's first nominee, but agreed to Koehler, who will "retain the talented management team at the IMF," said White House press secretary Joseph Lockhart. Stanley Fischer from the United States heads this group.

Cohen tells Tokyo: back U.S. forces

U.S. defense secretary William Cohen headed to Japan to press officials there to continue massive payments for 47,000 U.S. troops stationed in the country. "It's important to us," he said. Cohen also said he will tell the Japanese government to either "clean up or shut down" an incinerator located next to one base. Tokyo pays \$100,000 per year for every soldier, sailor, airman, and Marine stationed in the country, for a total of \$5 billion annually.

Japan's gross domestic product shrunk 1.4 percent in the final quarter of 1999, the second straight quarter of contraction, officially marking a recession.

Ally of Iranian president shot

An ally of Iran's president who helped organize the landslide electoral victory by the "reformers" was severely wounded when a man shot him in the face in central Tehran. Saeed Hajjarian, a newspaper editor, was a close associate of President Mohammad Khatami. In another development, the country's election panel ruled invalid without comment the election victories of five candidates identified with the Khatami forces in three cities. Khatami allies won 226 of the 290 seats in the country's parliament. A runoff of contested seats will be held April 21.

Swiss town votes on immigrants

Eligible voters in the town of Emmen, Switzerland, received a handbook detailing personal information on candidates for naturalization prior to a recent ballot to determine on a case-by-case basis who should get a Swiss passport. Information included a family photograph, financial status, background, and hobbies. The rightist People's Party has been campaigning for such votes across the country. Their reactionary views were stated by Urs Ischi in Emmen: "The Swiss feel danger because there are always more and more strangers here."

Pope says church "sinned"

Pope John Paul II, head of the Roman Catholic Church, apologized March 12 for 2,000 years of sins, "especially in the second millennium" by "some of our brothers." These included religious intolerance and injustice toward Jews, women, indigenous peoples, immigrants, and the poor. Bishop Piero Marini said that "given the number of sins committed in the course of 20 centuries," the description of the acts "must necessarily be rather summary."

Land occupations rise in Zimbabwe

What started as a trickle with a nod from the government of Robert Mugabe, spread quickly to an occupation of 426 large farms by thousands of landless peasants in Zimbabwe. The organization that represents the small minority of white farmers who own most of the fertile land in the African country complained to the government that it was doing nothing to control the situation. Tensions also rose between the British government, from whence the white farmers originally came, and Zimbabwe. Britain recalled its ambassador from its former colony when Zimbabwean officials refused to accept a six-ton shipment as protected diplomatic baggage.

Cut in price of Australian coal

Australian coal companies agreed to a 4 percent drop in the price of coal exported to Japan for use in power utilities there. Last year hard-coking coal prices were cut by 18 percent and thermal coal by 13 percent. Australian coal bosses have reduced the number of workers by almost 30 percent over two years, but increased production dramatically, marking productivity gains of nearly 40 percent.

Ban ended on interracial dating

One fallout of Republican presidential candidate George Bush's visit to the right-wing Bob Jones University has been to inadvertently put a spotlight on its ban on interracial dating. At first the college defended the ban, saying the Bible teaches that God does not want a unified and undifferentiated world. Then it ended the ban, stating the controversy threatened to cloud over the institution's "Christian mission."

Boeing halts research on new jet line

Boeing announced in mid-March that it is halting research on developing a new line of commercial jets. The *Wall Street Journal* noted this decision was "harmful to the company's long-term effort to compete against advancing rival Airbus." The *Journal* further worried that the strike by engineers and technicians is "virtually locking up many jet-making operations, and certain military lines." According to the paper, Boeing is shifting engineers from plants not affected by the strike to Seattle, where the strike is centered.

Join drive to win new readers

Supporters of the *Militant* are part of the proletarian resistance to the capitalist rulers' attempts to roll back affirmative action programs, gut medical benefits won by coal miners, and deepen the exploitation of working farmers, among other assaults. We encourage all to also become a part of the eight-week drive to sell subscriptions to the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* and copies of *New International* to striking workers, farmers fighting to defend their land, and rebel-minded youth involved in protests against cop brutality. Socialist workers and Young Socialists will launch the drive March 25.

Workers all over the globe who are resisting the bosses' drive to lower wages, cut benefits, and speed up production need to read the *Militant*. It tells the truth and reports on their struggles. The socialist newsweekly helps link struggles together—from locked-out steelworkers at AK Steel, to striking meat packers in New Zealand, to farmers in Ireland fighting for better prices for their products. It reports on the new mood of resistance developing among working people and their efforts to forge alliances and extend the hand of solidarity from one battle to the next.

The *Militant* is the only newspaper where fighters can get an analysis of shifts in the class struggle and the facts about political developments around the world from a working-class viewpoint.

The Marxist magazine *New International* is an excellent source of information for class-conscious fighters who want to delve more deeply into the issues and questions raised in the *Militant*. The campaign to increase the readership of the *Militant* goes hand-in-hand with sales of *New International*.

Many fighters engaged in labor actions and farm struggles will want to read the *Militant* for its assessment of the capitalist crisis and how the working class can lead

humanity out of the disastrous consequences. They read how the big-business media hails the booming U.S. economy and the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, while hunger and homelessness is spreading for millions of working people. Workers sense that this social system is heading toward worldwide economic devastation.

A special part of the subscription effort will be going door-to-door in working-class neighborhoods to introduce the paper, encouraging workers in industrial unions to sign up, and setting up literature tables on college campuses. Supporters of the campaign will also go back to workers and others who purchased copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder*.

Supporters are encouraged to make the first week of the subscription drive an international target week, aimed at maximizing participation in the campaign, getting in stride for the effort, and mapping out a battle plan for selling subscriptions to co-workers, co-fighters, friends, and others. The *Militant* encourages all its supporters to join in this effort.

One of the central aims of the circulation campaign will be seeking out young rebels and fighting workers, winning them to consider communist ideas, and recruiting them to the communist movement. The *Militant* is a paper for those who are looking for a way to respond to the deepening capitalist crisis.

As Jack Barnes notes in *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics*, "Growing numbers, as individuals and in small groups, start challenging the legitimacy of capitalism itself and are attracted to socialism, to the communist movement, to the traditions of the working class."

The sales campaign is an essential part of reaching out broadly to young fighters and others; offering them a political perspective on how to fight more effectively.

Boeing strikers say: 'We've already won'

BY SCOTT BREEN

SEATTLE—A rally of 3,500 engineers and technicians on strike against Boeing held here March 7 was a resounding rejection of the company's unilateral imposition of a contract one month after the walkout began.

"We've already won—we'll never be divided and weak again," said Rob Henley, an Industrial Methods Analyst. "The more rallies, the more united we become," he said.

Boeing's feeble attempt to start a back-to-work movement by unilaterally imposing its last wage offer has only hardened the strikers' resolve. The walkout has surprised the bosses, grounded delivery of new airplanes, and forced Boeing's stock into a nosedive. Even the company was forced to admit that fewer than 100 new employees returned to work of the 18,000 on strike against the giant commercial jetliner and war plane manufacturer.

Joining the rally were two busloads of Steelworkers from Spokane locked-out a year ago by the Kaiser Aluminum company. They were greeted by a thunderous chant of "One day longer," and received two standing ovations in the course of the evening when speakers referred to their struggle.

Dario Villabilanca, a striking tool engineer with 10 years at Boeing, noted, "The barrier between white collar and blue collar is breaking down."

The Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA) organized the rally two days after Boeing announced its decision to unilaterally impose the wage package of its third and final offer on all SPEEA-represented employees. Boeing had declared an "impasse" in the federal-mediated negotiations with SPEEA the previous week, claiming that it could impose its contract offer on the 22,000 SPEEA-represented workers, 4,000 of whom remain working. The talks had collapsed and no new negotiations are scheduled.

SPEEA challenged Boeing's declaration of an impasse, and has filed charges of unfair labor practices with the National Labor Relations Board.

At the rally, Richard Trumka, secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO, said that the union federation is going to circulate an appeal throughout the labor movement for financial aid for the SPEEA strike. The AFL-CIO donated \$50,000 and pledged \$25,000 per week.

Don Jones, a member of the Teamsters union that organizes Boeing's 300 truck drivers, told the crowd that their contract with Boeing ends March 31. Negotiations had just begun on a new contract that very day. "We don't like crossing your lines," he explained. "You need to know we're behind you." Teamsters officials have abided by a no-strike clause in their contract, as have

those of the International Association of Machinists (IAM), Boeing's largest union with some 30,000 members in the Puget Sound region.

Also speaking were Ron Judd, of the King County Labor Council; Craig Buckham, president of SPEEA; and Charles Bofferding, executive director of SPEEA.

Lynda Maynard, doing her picket duty outside Boeing's Renton factory described Boeing's move as "scare tactics." It won't work, she felt, because "if there is one thing Boeing could do to make us even madder," it was to impose their last offer.

Boeing's third contract offer was so poor, union negotiators didn't bother submitting it to a vote of the membership, since it included the benefit takeaways from Boeing's first contract offer rejected by 98 percent of the membership last December. Boeing chairman Philip Condit made clear the company's intent to wait out the strikers when he said that Boeing "has nothing more to offer."

The wage package Boeing instituted was basically the same as the second proposal that SPEEA members rejected in February. It offered a 3 percent salary increase over three years for engineers and guarantees only 2 percent pay raises each year for the technicians, all of whose salaries are well below industry standards. Raises of up to 8 percent in the first year touted by Boeing



Militant/Scott Breen

Striking workers march on Boeing's corporate headquarters in Seattle February 23.

are at the discretion of company supervisors.

The strike has had an impact on Boeing, which missed 15 of 42 jetliner deliveries in February. The company has delivered only 15 planes since the strike began and delays have occurred on many of its military programs. In the first 10 days of March, Boeing has not been able to deliver a single airplane at its giant factories in Everett and Renton.

The strike is having its biggest impact, however, on the engineers and technicians themselves. With some pride, and a wink of his eye, Charlie Coombs, an electrical engineer with 12 years working for Boeing,

said, "We didn't know how strong we engineers were until we struck!"

On March 9 SPEEA engineers and technicians celebrated their first month on strike on all their picket lines, with cake and a barbecue. They invited office workers and mechanics to join them on their lunch breaks. Hundreds of workers responded to the invitation.

One Machinist at the celebration outside the Renton factory where the 737 and 757 aircraft are assembled, told a striker, "Now you're learning that you're not a member of the Boeing family—you're a member of the labor family."

Houston: protesters reject cop killing of immigrant

BY JACQUIE HENDERSON

HOUSTON—Close to 100 people rallied March 10 in front of the apartment building where a Houston cop shot Jaime Santiago, a 23-year-old construction worker five days earlier. Santiago is the fourth Mexican immigrant the Houston cops have admitted killing in less than three years.

Eyewitness accounts from neighbors report that the cop, on his second visit to Santiago's apartment that Saturday evening and early Sunday morning, shouted something in English and then opened fire. Neither Santiago nor his friend Aurelio Hernandez, who was with him on the porch, spoke English.

The cop's assault was reportedly in response to music Santiago was playing. Following the killing the cops issued a story that Santiago picked up a toy gun. Hernandez denies this, saying that the toy remained on the window sill several feet away from where his friend was shot.

Luce Aguilar, a sewing machine operator who lives nearby, explained why she came to the protest. "I think it is very important to protest against the police and to make them stop these killings," she said, rejecting police claims of being fearful of a toy

gun. "If he saw a gun he could have shot him in the hand or arm. But no, they shoot to kill."

David Ferguson, also a sewing machine operator who works with Aguilar at a nearby garment factory, attended the rally. He is the Socialist Workers Party candidate for Congress in Houston. Ferguson urged workers

and unionists in the city to "speak out against these killings by the cops and demand: Jail the cop who killed Jaime Santiago!"

Representatives of the Mexican consulate also participated in the event.

Jacquie Henderson is a garment worker in Houston.

Steelworkers in Ohio reach out for solidarity

Continued from front page

hundred private security company "goon guards" to lock out the steelworkers.

Other issues include the company's violations of seniority rights, replacement of 16 percent of union jobs with nonunion contractors, and pensions below industry standards.

Steelworkers say they expect workers on strike against Titan Tire in Natchez, Mississippi, and Des Moines, Iowa, to participate in the March 25 action. They have sought out opportunities to talk to other workers, such as at a rally in Dayton, Ohio, to support Teamsters fighting for a union at the Overnite trucking company. Activists and their spouses have handed out informa-

tional flyers at a series of auto shows in the region.

The Mansfield mill makes a specialty steel for automobile exhaust systems. There are reports that at least a dozen union buses are coming in from surrounding states. An over-the-road truck driver in Cleveland told this reporter that the highways he uses in the Mansfield area have long rows of lawn signs supporting the locked out workers.

For information about the March 25 rally, contact USWA Local 169 at 376 West Longview Avenue, Mansfield, Ohio 44903. Or call: (419) 522-9375.

Henry Hillenbrand is a member of USWA Local 185 in Cleveland.

LETTERS

Truckers protest

Recently two teams of supporters of the *Militant* went out to truck stops in the Des Moines area. Truckers, most of whom are owner-operators, were very interested in the protests that have occurred on the East Coast as a result of the recent increases in fuel costs. Most of the truckers we talked to owned their own rigs but worked for one company.

One told us that if it weren't for the income his wife was bringing in he would not be able to continue in this job. Another, who lives in Kansas but works for a company in Iowa, was sympathetic to the protests. He told us that he had participated in a strike of truckers in Houston, Texas, in the early 1990s and that they had won their demands by shutting down the port there.

It seems as though the situation of owner-operators is similar to family farmers who contract out to big producers. This is especially true for hog and chicken farmers who take all the risks of production

but who are beholden to the processors like Smithfield, IBP, and Perdue.

Several truckers pointed to the actions of French truckers who set up blockades across the country on January 31. An operator from Minnesota said, "We really need a national strike like they had in France but we're kind of a hard group to organize."

Edwin Fruit
Des Moines, Iowa

Rural unrest in China

Militant readers may be interested in an item from the February 9 issue of the *South China Morning Post*. According to columnist Willy Wo-Lap Lam, an internal assessment by the Chinese Communist Party counted more than 2,000 "riots" and "violent demonstrations" against rural authorities in 1999. Several million participated in peaceful rural protests, such as sit-ins and petitions to Beijing.

Wo-Lap reported that estimated rural joblessness is 200 million, out

of a rural population of 900 million. He termed it a "time bomb that could explode with disastrous consequences."

The full article is available for a nominal sum at www.scmp.com. (Use the site's "advanced" archive search, with the byline and date.)
Dave Morrow
Oakland, California

On anti-immigrant rally

The article in your March 13 edition about a recent anti-immigrant rally involving [ex-Klan leader] David Duke ("Residents oppose racist, anti-immigrant rally") gave a good sense of the opposition that emerged spontaneously in the area to the racist demonstration.

As the article notes, the major Hispanic and civil-rights organizations directed their energies toward discouraging people from showing up, based on the false hope that by ignoring the racist mobilization—which in this case represented the early stages of an effort to organize a sustained anti-immigrant cam-

paign—the problem would disappear.

Thus, the unorganized counter-demonstration was a very positive example of the willingness of broad sections of the working-class, immigrant, and youth populations to fight racist scapegoating, as well as an example of the importance of the battle of political ideas and programs among fighters for social justice.

John Cox
Carrboro, North Carolina

Prison study group

I am incarcerated in the Southport Correctional Facility. This is a Special Housing Unit in which we are all locked down 24 hours a day with the exception of one hour a day exercise in a single-man dog cage these neo-Nazis call the yard. We are unable to earn prison wages as we are not allowed to work, and lack funds. We do have an informal study group in need of progressive literature and a subscription to the *Militant* would be of great help. In struggle.
A prisoner

Pine City, New York

Inmate needs 'PM'

I request a prisoner's subscription to the Spanish-language *Perspectiva Mundial*. I am having someone else write this letter for me. English is not my native language. I am currently incarcerated, and therefore indigent. Some prisoner here exposed me to several copies of the *Militant* and I enjoyed the coverage of the events in my native Cuba. I would like to follow this coverage in Spanish. I would greatly appreciate if your office would begin sending me a prisoner's subscription to *Perspectiva Mundial*.

A prisoner
Hagerstown, Maryland

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of general interest to our readers.

Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

London elections highlight growing resistance in labor movement

BY PETE CLIFFORD

LONDON—Debate has opened up here, both among working people and in ruling-class circles, on central political questions in the framework of the elections for the city's mayor and assembly.

Last week Ken Livingstone, a Member of Parliament (MP) in the Labour Party, announced his candidacy for mayor as part of a deepening struggle over the direction of the party.

At a March 10 rally here, 300 firefighters enthusiastically applauded Livingstone after he pledged support for their fight. The rally was organized by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) in defense of 11 of its members facing disciplinary action for supporting the union's ban on working overtime.

Flanked by firefighters wearing T-shirts reading, "Fire Brigades Union: Ken for Mayor," Livingstone said 94 percent of FBU members voted for him in the Labour Party selection process compared to 2 percent for Frank Dobson, the nominee backed by Prime Minister Anthony Blair, the leader of the Labour Party.

Despite this and similar votes in all the other unions that conducted ballots, as well as majority support amongst party members, the Labour leaders organized the election in such a way as to ensure Dobson was selected to run as the Labour candidate in the May 4 election.

Livingstone at first called on Dobson to stand down, but announced an independent campaign when Labour leaders refused to do so. Livingstone was suspended from the Labour Party for the move, but says he does not want to split Labour and seeks to return to the party. He called for a second preference vote for Dobson and says that he would campaign for the return of a Labour government in the next election.

The day following his announcement,



Militant/Phil Waterhouse

Firefighters at rally in March applauded mayoral candidate Ken Livingstone

opinion polls gave Livingstone 68 percent of the vote, 55 points ahead of Dobson's 13 percent. In addition to the London leaders of the Fire Brigades Union, leaders from the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers and the public sector workers union, have pledged their support to Livingstone. Leaders of the Transport and General Workers' Union said that in spite of their union ballot casting 85 percent for Livingstone, they will recommend a vote for Dobson.

The decision to press ahead with Dobson has also been met with a deep unease in the Labour Party. Stephen Pound, a pro-Blair MP, said on the BBC that it is "having pretty

devastating consequences for the Labour Party in London," with many party members indicating they won't be actively campaigning for Dobson.

At the firefighters protest, Reg Williams from Southend explained his view: "As far as I'm concerned Labour is now a conservative party. It's Livingstone who is running for Labour." Another firefighter added, "Even though most firefighters are staunch Labour, most will vote for Ken Livingstone, as he has always opposed cuts." Also speaking at the protest were a team of four strikers from the 16-month-long Skycheffs strike. After Livingstone spoke they made a beeline for him, keen to discuss their fight.

Amidst this discussion and debate, Jonathan Silberman announced that he is running as a candidate of the Communist League (CL) for the London Assembly in the Lambeth and Southwark constituency.

Silberman, a member of the Transport and General Workers' Union, pointed to an undemocratic aspect of the election law that requires a £10,000 deposit to run for mayor. This regulation prevents the League from running a candidate for the post. Even for the assembly, CL supporters need to raise a prohibitive £1,000 deposit (£1 = US\$1.57).

Deepening resistance today

"The deep support for Livingstone, rooted in the ranks of the unions," Silberman said, "is a reflection of not only the growing unpopularity of the Labour government but also the deepening union resistance today. Our campaign explains that capitalism is the cause of the social devastation, attacks on the unions, harsher conditions on the job, racist attacks and discrimination, imperialist wars, and the continued occupation of northern Ireland.

"Our campaign charts a course of revolutionary struggle to establish a government of workers and farmers," the Communist League candidate said. "That victory will open the fight to overturn capitalism and to start on the road to establish new social relations and a new society, socialism. This is what we have to offer fighting workers, farmers, and youth who are today standing up and resisting the impact of the world capitalist economic crisis."

In an interview, Silberman commented on Austria, where fascist Jörg Haider's Freedom Party and the conservative People's Party are now in a coalition government. "This is not the first time this has happened in recent years in Europe," he said. "It points to the importance of working people charting a revolutionary course to counter the rulers' drive toward imposing fascist solutions to their crisis."

Speaking at a Militant Labour Forum in

London on March 10, Young Socialist member James Neil welcomed Silberman's campaign. "A few months ago, some 15,000 students protested the government's imposition of tuition fees and demanded free education as a right," Neil said. "When people fight like this they cease to underestimate themselves and learn about their place in the world. Young people form a bedrock of this resistance. That is what the Young Socialists are about," he said, appealing for youth to join with Silberman's campaign. Jaswinder Pal, a Skycheffs striker, appealed for support to Silberman's campaign at the same forum.

Silberman said the communist campaign will raise a voice in opposition to the "London first" framework set by the capitalist parties. "All other political parties talk of 'Londoners' and 'London's interest' to get a greater share of the national cake," Silberman said. "But London is class divided. Working people here have the same class interests as working people from Belfast to Havana."

A worker-farmer alliance needed

Today, he said, a centerpiece of advancing the resistance against the assault by the employers and government is for working people and the unions to "build an alliance with working farmers who are fighting the devastating impact of the crisis on the land." Silberman pointed to the protest by 250 dairy farmers in Wales demanding a price increase. The farmers are losing money to produce milk.

One example of how issues are posed in the struggle within the Labour Party is that of "crime," said Silberman, who pointed to Blair's statement that Livingstone "would be a disaster, a financial disaster, a disaster in terms of crime and police and business." Livingstone said in response that he wanted to put thousands more police on the streets.

Silberman said that approaching crime in this framework was a deadly trap for working people. "The entire system of the cops, courts, and prisons is designed to do one thing: protect the private property system of the super-wealthy ruling families and keep working people intimidated and in check," he said.

"Capitalism itself is a criminal system, with the brutalities and divisions it imposes on society. Even many crimes committed by working people against each other can be traced to the prejudices, second-class status of women, and dog-eat-dog mentality inherent in the class-divided society of capitalism," he continued.

"This has the effect of taking our eyes off the unity and solidarity we can gain through struggle. It instead seeks to criminalize a section of working people, especially Blacks and youth."

Silberman explained that his campaign would urge a vote for Livingstone. "Although he is not the official Labour candidate, his campaign is still part of the Labour Party. Through its links to the unions, the Labour Party is looked to by the vast majority of working people. Fighters take sides in this division and should extend critical support to Livingstone. A strong vote for him will boost fighters and be a blow against the capitalist rulers."

"This does not mean that Livingstone's policies are a way forward," continued Silberman. "On the contrary, they point working people in the same fundamental direction as Blair. The issue is that the ranks of the unions see his candidacy as a way to strike a blow against the course of the Blair leadership. We are 100 percent with that."

"In constituencies where the Communist League is not standing in the Assembly elections," he said, "we recommend a vote for the Labour candidates."

Pete Clifford is a member of the Transport and General Workers' Union.

Cops protest chief's firing after award given for killing Black youth

BY BRIAN TAYLOR

Police and their supporters in Louisville, Kentucky, organized a rowdy 600-strong reactionary demonstration March 3 demanding Mayor David Armstrong's ouster and the reinstatement of Police Chief Eugene Sherrard.

Sherrard was dismissed for bestowing "medals of exceptional valor" on two white cops, who last May sprayed 22 bullets at 18-year-old Desmond Rudolph, killing him. Despite public outrage, the cops walked free after a grand jury investigation. Rudolph was Black. In response to the cop action, some 800 Louisville residents—organized in part by Armstrong—marched in the streets two days later.

Police blocked downtown traffic in Lou-

isville, left their assigned posts throughout the city, and joined in protest in front of City Hall, demanding that Sherrard be reinstated. Pro-cop forces distributed "Armstrong's Wrong" T-shirts and called for the mayor to be fired, saying he fell to pressures from the Black community. The nine top commanders of the 720-member force attended the rally and threw down their badges. The *Cincinnati Post* reports that nine top-level officials of the Louisville Police Department have resigned.

Mayor Armstrong's firing of Sherrard, as well as the pro-cop action and the counterprotest, reflect a real polarization in Louisville on the issue of police brutality. Genuine public anger over the cop medals exerted pressure on Armstrong to denounce the awards. Many people joined protests against the killing and exoneration of the cops 10 months ago. The acknowledgment and rejection of rampant police brutality extends beyond the 30 percent of Louisville's citizens who are Black.

Armstrong himself is no campaigner against police brutality. He has been endorsed many times by cop organizations and he hand picked Sherrard as police chief. And when the two cops were freed of all charges in the May 1999 killing, protests fell on deaf ears at City Hall.

Cops have called another street action for March 17—coinciding with a St. Patrick's Day march—where Fraternal Order of Police lodges around the country are reportedly sending representatives to demand Sherrard's reinstatement.

One counterprotester at the March 5 action said, "The [Ku Klux] Klan ought to be excited, because in Louisville, Kentucky, you can kill a Black man and get an award."



Fired police chief salutes fellow cops. He was dismissed after giving awards to two cops who killed Black youth in a barrage of 22 bullets last May.